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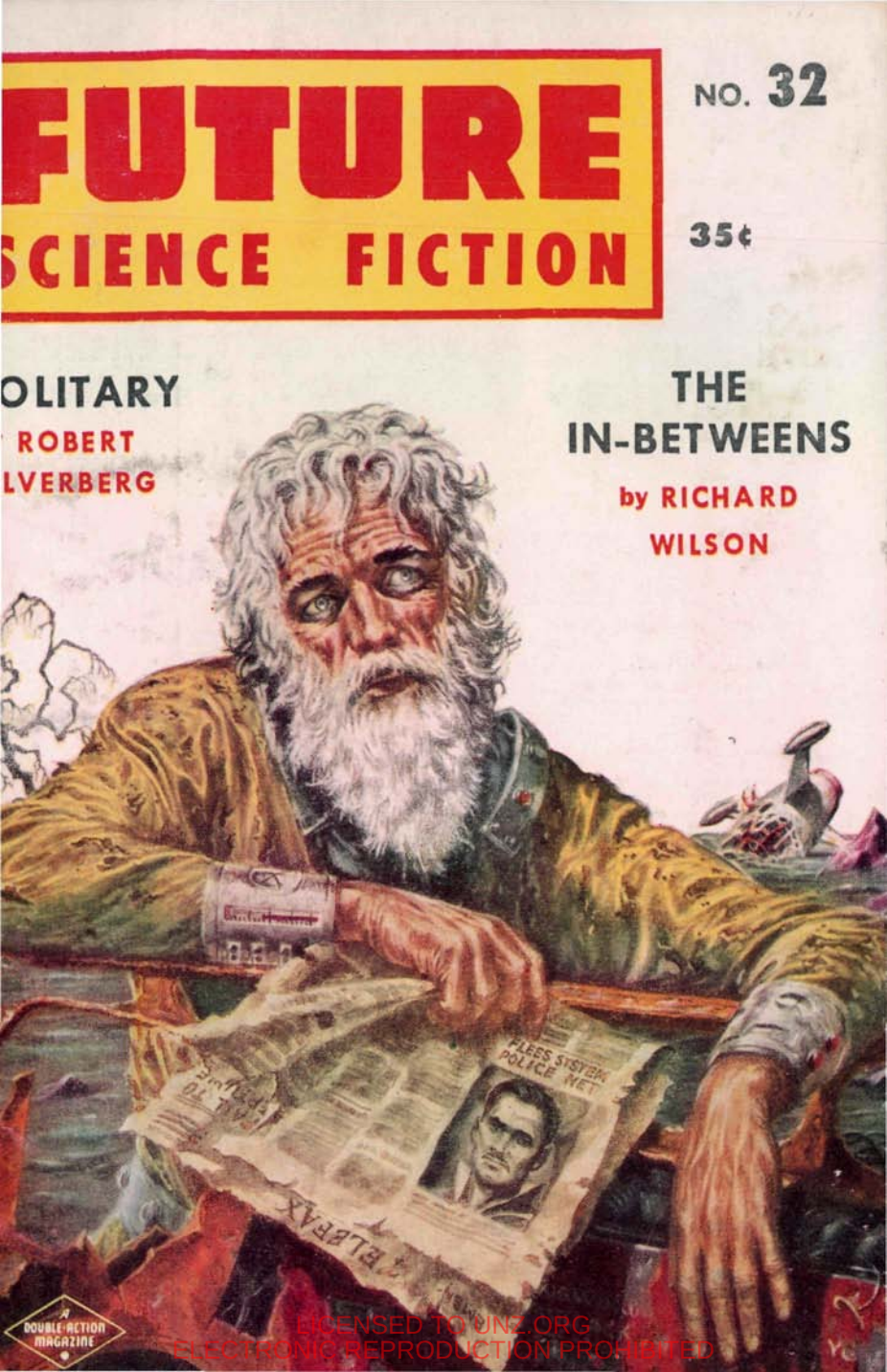
by RICHARD WILSON



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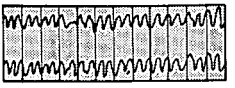

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Charcot tore out the automatic communication system...

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Crime analyses were handled by TOTIVAC, which could handle and integrate more data in microseconds than a human being could in hours. But the trouble was that when TOTIVAC indicated, for example, that no one would try to hide on Bellatrix IV — a world devoid of all life — it only meant that such action would be illogical. And since all the logical places for the escaped convict, Charcot, to hide had been covered . . .

solitary

by Robert Silverberg

(author of "The Man With Talent")

EVER SINCE the computers came to be running things pretty much their own way, handling data and forming conclusions, the only way a man could achieve any notice in the galaxy was to do some original thinking—and by original, read *alogical.* An analog computer is a clever thing, with its countless supercooled cryotrons clicking off bits of information, but its mind is a limited sort of creature. Men, luckily, aren't limited to the flip-flop on-off type of binary thinking that the computers specialize in.

Among those most painfully aware of this was Geourge Brauer of Crime Bureau. Because the job of keeping data on the galaxy's criminals was so complex, Crime Bureau was among the first to be completely computerized. Its employees were reduced to the level of data-predigestors, selecting information to be programmed and fed to the computers. As the centuries passed, the human members of Crime

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Bureau became less and less necessary to the scheme of things. They were mere adjuncts to the TOTIVAC that did the actual work.

This irked Geourge Brauer.

AT THIRTY-ONE, he felt he was at a crossroads. This was his fifth year with Crime Bureau—and in those five years he had become an increasingly more skillful computer technician, nothing more. This was not why he had joined Crime Bureau.

He had been interested, being a serious, reflective man, in the concepts of crime and punishment, the philosophical determinance of guilt, mores and ethos, responsibility and necessary obligation. They fascinated him.

"You ought to join Crime Bureau," his college roommate told him sourly. "Always talking about murders and things, as if you were going to commit a couple."

"It's purely a scholarly interest," Brauer said. And when he graduated, he joined Crime Bureau.

At thirty-one he was at a crossroads.

Moodily he sat at his burnished duralplast desk in the magnificent Crime Bureau Ministratory in Upper Ontario, toying with the sheets of paper before him. They listed statistics governing occurrence of voyeurism on Earth, and on the seventeen Norm Planets used as guideposts in such things. Brauer was supposed to integrate them, feed them to omnivorous TOTIVAC, and wait while the statistics came rattling back neatly interpreted. They were to be transmitted to Lurinar IX, an Earth-type planet afflicted simultaneously with a rash of voyeurism and with a starchily-puritanical ruling oligarchy, for benefit of the bemused and troubled Chief of Police there.

As he worked, Brauer found himself envying that Chief of Police. Stranded on a backwater world as he was, at least the man had a chance to deal with crime and criminals first hand, not with the ever-present TOTIVAC peering over his shoulder. Brauer plodded gloomily through the long columns, then sent the whole tape whirring into the innards of the computer.

Pulses flitted down tantalum cryotrons; information was bandied and conclusions drawn. And Brauer ground his fist into his chin in boredom.

THE COMPUTER took all the trial-and-error out of things. To be sure, TOTIVAC operated on a trial-and-error system itself, as did any analog computer. But the inter-

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val between successive trials was often less than a micro-microsecond, and a speed of that order allowed for all the wrong guesses a machine would be likely to make in a two-minute span.

Two minutes. The data came chittering back at him. Without even looking at it, Brauer tossed it in the upper basket on his desk.

Stultification—that was the word. A man had to do a little thinking on his own. It was all right to use the computer as a tool to simplify the process of thought—but not as a substitute for it.

On a sudden impulse he stuck a requisition form in his typewriter, which was an antiquated manual model, and tapped out a brief message: SEND ME DATA CARDS ON CURRENT FILE OF UNSOLVED CRIMES.

He glanced at what he had written, scowled, then added for benefit of the computer: TIME LIMITATION: LAST THIRTY YEARS. SPACE LIMITATION: THIS GALAXY.

Brauer paused, then tacked on a second postscript: HOP TO IT, OR I'LL PUT KETCHUP IN YOUR FEED LINES.

HE INTEGRATED the requisition form and shot it downward into TOTIVAC's bowels. An instant later the red light over his desk blazed, indicating a message from the computer, and the machine replied: COERCION INVALIDATES REQUISITION. PLEASE DELETE SAME OR FACE PENALTY.

Brauer could imagine the storm his whimsical threat had kicked up down in the defensive banks of the computer; probably they were busy monitoring the cooling system, the fuel input, and anything else that might be construed as a "feed line," on guard for a sudden influx of ketchup.

COERCION DELETED, he replied. NO DANGER OF DESTRUCTION BY KETCHUP.

The warning-light blinked out; the computer's hackles were subsiding.

Moments later came the deluge.

He had asked for the current file of unsolved cases; he got it. It came spilling out of the computer's orifice with a rush and a roar, card after card covered with TOTIVAC's neat typing. Brauer blinked as the cards piled up. There were a lot of people in the galaxy, and a great many crimes—and if even just a bare fraction went unsolved—

He sighed. There was no

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way to interrupt the machine, now that it had begun to disgorge. The computer was reaching into the depths of its files, coming up with cases that had been on the books for decades. At least five thousand cards were on his desk now, and still they came.

THE COMMUNICATOR chimed. Brauer grabbed it and heard his superior bark, "Brauer, what are you *doing?*"

"Original research, Chief," he said smoothly. "The machine's a little over-enthusiastic, that's all."

"Oh? Research on what."

"I'd prefer not to talk about it until I'm finished. I may need a short leave of absence, too."

"I suppose it can be arranged," the Chief said gruffly, and broke the contact.

Brauer stared balefully at the mounting stack of cards. All right; he had announced he was working on something. Now he would have to follow through.

A second stack of five thousand cards had appeared, and it seemed as if the computer was well on its way toward delivering a third when abruptly a single card fluttered out of the orifice and the message-light flashed. Brauer snatched up the communication.

END OF IMMEDIATE-ACCESS OPEN FILES. THERE WILL BE DELAY OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY SECONDS WHILE SECONDARY FILES ARE SEARCHED.

"No there won't!" Brauer half-shouted. Quickly he pecked out a reply: DATA ALREADY DELIVERED IS SUFFICIENT FOR PROJECT. TERMINATE SEARCH WITHOUT FURTHER ACTIVITY.

A pause, then the response: ACKNOWLEDGED. TERMINATED.

"Thank goodness," Brauer said fervently. He stared at the heaps of data-cards in a somewhat glassy-eyed manner, feeling like the sorcerer's apprentice. But at least he had managed to shut off the flow.

HE LIFTED the uppermost card and skimmed it. Tall thin Sirian suspected of shoplifting in Third City of Vega IV twenty-nine point nine years before, never apprehended. Further details other side.

The second card was even less promising. Child's pet stolen by large hairy man on morning of 7 July 2561, planet Earth. Pet never recovered. Details other side.

The card had been in the files thirty years. Someone could gain more than a little prestige, Brauer thought, sim-

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ply by clearing junk like this out of the memory banks. By now the stolen pet, unless it had been a Galapagos turtle, was long since dead, and the bereaved child grown to manhood. And yet the "crime" was still carried as unsolved.

He reached for a third card. Like the first two, it dated back thirty years. But it was considerably more interesting. Brauer read it once perfunctorily, then went back and examined it in detail.

CHARCOT, Edward Hammond. Born 21 Dec 2530, New York City, Earth (Sol III). Criminal record: petty theft, apprehended 8 Nov 2547, corrective term one month. Released for good behavior. Kidnapping, apprehended 12 Jan 2558, escaped from custody 17 Jan 2558, relocated 11 June 2559, concluded 4 October 2559. Trial begun 18 June correctory, transshipped to Procyon IV 7 November 2559. Entered upon life term 11 Jan 2560, escaped from Procyon Correctory 12 May 2560. Still at large (see Additional Data Sheet 101 in request file.)

BRAUER flexed the card between two fingers and dug back in his memory—a memory not nearly as retentive as TOTIVAC's, but unusually good as mere organic ones went. He was investigating the data stored away in his youth, in his period of greatest criminological enthusiasm, before the disillusionment of joining Crime Bureau.

Edward Charcot. Yes, he remembered Charcot, even though the case had been most notorious only a month or two after Brauer's birth. Charcot had been a cheap criminal, a petty hood of the sort that no amount of careful breeding seemed likely ever to eradicate from human genetic lines. He had committed a particularly vicious kidnapping thirty-odd years ago, and he had been caught. And, unless Brauer's memory was at fault, he was to date the only man ever to break out of the Procyon Correctory.

With nervous haste he shoved the umpteen-thousand data cards back into the computer's orifice and punched out a new requisition: SEND ADDITIONAL DATA SHEET 101 ON CHARCOT, EDWARD HAMMOND.

Moments later the sheet arrived. To his satisfaction Brauer saw he had been right: Charcot's notoriety was based on the fact that he was the only man ever to escape from Procyon's airtight correctory.

He had stolen a one-man warpship somehow, and struck out for point's unknown before anyone knew he was missing. One of the minor mysteries of the case was

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how Charcot had managed to escape—but since no one before or since had succeeded in getting off Procyon IV, it was considered that the experiment was non-repeatable. The major mystery was Charcot's whereabouts.

The data sheet listed all reports, reliable and otherwise, of his location. He had been seen (or half-seen) at a dozen places radiating in a more-or-less straight line out toward the region of Bellatrix, and there the trail vanished. A sporadic search of the six planets of Bellatrix had revealed nothing.

THOUGHTS tumbled through Brauer's mind.

Who Edward Charcot was didn't much matter, nor the fact that Charcot had humiliated the penologists by getting out in an escape-proof correctory, not that he was responsible for a fairly ghastly crime. No.

He had disappeared, though—and that offended Brauer's sense of order. In a galaxy so carefully regulated by analog computers, men didn't disappear. At least, not easily. Of course, this Charcot was a clever chap, obviously—but still, where could he have gone?

The trail led toward Bellatrix and its system. Brauer licked his lips reflectively. A major attempt had, no doubt, been made toward finding Charcot. It had failed.

Why? Some deficiency inherent in the nature of the pursuit, no doubt. Brauer's pulse-rate started climbing. Here was a chance for original research; here was a chance for an ordinary flesh-and-blood man, with a built-in capacity for making cockeyed guesses, to show up a billion-unit cryotronic computer with its deplorably binary way of thinking.

He decided to find Edward Charcot.

THE FIRST step was to activate the communicator.

"Chief, this is Brauer. I want to request a three-month leave from duty."

"With or without pay?"

Brauer hesitated, then boldly said, "With. It's to do that special research job I was talking about."

There was a pause. "Three months with pay...it may be rough on our budget, Geourge. Can you tell me anything about the research?"

"I'm going to find Edward Charcot," Brauer said.

The reaction was predictable: "Who?"

"Charcot. The kidnapper who escaped from Procyon

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Correctory in 2560. Remember?"

"Oh—that one. Hmmm. All right. Fill out the form, integrate it yourself, and feed it to the machine. You know how to do it. I'll see to it your leave's approved."

Brauer rapidly integrated the leave-request and let TOTIVAC have it. Then he formulated a new requisition: SEND ALL DATA AVAILABLE ON CHARCOT, EDWARD HAMMOND.

Moments later he had it, including duplicates of the data-card and Additional Data Sheet 101; the machine was damnably literal about "all data" requests.

Brauer cleared his desk and proceeded to examine the information. Most of it was a repetition of what he had already learned; he skimmed through that, and also through most of Charcot's biography. He wasn't interested in that.

HE WAS interested in the post-escape part of the data. Included in the packet were transcripts of statements by men who had allegedly seen Charcot (or thought they had) in one guise or another after his much-publicized escape. Someone—Brauer hoped it was a man, and not just a watchful facet of TOTIVAC—had charted a probability-pattern with each report of Charcot carefully inked in according to a weighted color-spectrum of credibility, ranging from bright cerise for *"fairly reliable"* down to dark violet for *"totally untrustworthy."*

The color-chart led undeniably toward Bellatrix. And appended to the packet was the report of the scouting-mission that had searched the area for Charcot.

Apparently TOTIVAC had analyzed the six planets of Bellatrix and had concluded that Charcot would be on either Bellatrix II, III, or VI, all of which were inhabited by reasonably docile forms of intelligent life.

Scout-ship CD102-X3 had diligently searched Bellatrix II, III, and VI. There had been no sign of Charcot. Whereupon, the trail having trickled out, the Charcot file had been dumped into *"Unsolved,"* and probably had mouldered there unmolested until Brauer's requisition had released it.

Humming gently to himself, Brauer rummaged through the rest of the packet. Included was a telefax sheet, now somewhat yellowed with age, dated 12 May 2560, point of origin Procyon IV. It showed a photo of the escapee—he

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was a darkly handsome, almost suave-looking man, Brauer noted, with a faint mustache, deep-set eyes, a smirk rather than a smile on his lips. A shrewd man, Brauer decided, even though it was an elementary rule of criminology to place little weight upon superficialities of appearance. Yet in Charcot's case, his actions bore out the testimony of his features: it took a shrewd man to get out of Procyon Correctory.

The telefax sheet went on to mention the reward offered for information leading to Charcot's recovery, described him, gave a brief biography. Doubtless there still were some of these sheets mounted on post-office walls in obscure parts of the galaxy, Brauer thought.

He put the telefax sheet back in the file packet and restored the other material as well. He dumped it all into the receiving orifice.

SEND DATA ON THE BELLATRIX SYSTEM, he ordered the computer.

BELLATRIX was a star of magnitude Plus 1.7, located 215 light-years from Earth. Relative to Earth, it was located in the constellation Orion, but of course visual proximity from an external point had nothing to do with actual three-dimensional location in the universe.

According to the data Brauer had, Bellatrix had a planetary system comprising six worlds; Bellatrix I was 500,000,000 miles from its blazing primary, and the other five planets were arrayed in normally-distributed orbits up to a distance of three billion miles.

Brauer quickly ran through the survey reports on the six worlds.

Belltarix I was uninhabited and uninhabitable; it took a regular roasting from the sun, and had a mean temperature of about 300°F.

Bellatrix II *was* inhabited; it was a watery world (the "water," however, in actuality being a mixture of liquefied halogens.) The natives were amiable chlorine-breathers whose hide resisted etching by the lakes of hydrogen fluoride common on the planet.

Bellatrix III was likewise inhabited; this was a large, low-mass world peopled by ruminant herbivores, four-legged but intelligent; the record showed a Terran settlement in operation there.

BRAUER continued to read. Bellatrix IV and V were both uninhabited: IV was a rocky unappealing world with a scant population of lichens

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and nothing else. Life had simply not yet gained a foothold there. V was a gas giant of massive gravitational attraction; its surface was unstable, and explorers had deemed it unwise to land.

As for Bellatrix VI, it was an Earth-type world, somewhat colder on the mean, inhabited by humanoid creatures just entering the food-producing stage of culture. The scouts had recommended a closed status for this world, for fear of upsetting the normal development of the expanding culture. The closure had been approved.

Brauer then studied the report of the search once again. He was not surprised to read TOTIVAC'S evaluation of Charcot's possible whereabouts.

BELLATRIX VI, being a closed world, was the most likely place for a callous criminal to hide, since there was little chance of his discovery on a closed world. Therefore VI had been the prime target of the searchers.

After that came III, since it was a livable and inhabited world. Further down the scale of probability was II, the water-world, where an Earthman could manage to survive if properly protected.

The other three worlds had been rather casually dismissed: V, the gas giant, was eliminated completely, since it was impossible to suvive long on a world without a solid surface; I, with its temperature of 300°, was docketed for only a cursory once-over, since it, too, was hardly promising as a hideout for an escaped criminal.

As for Bellatrix V, the utterly barren world, it was likewise dealt off by the computer with a mere once-over. After all, it was illogical that a fleeing man would choose to settle even for a few days on a world devoid of all life.

Brauer chuckled happily as he read TOTIVAC's solemn conclusion. Illogical, indeed! Sure it was illogical. But all that meant was that no self-respecting computer would ever choose to hide there.

Happily, Brauer put away his data, confirmed his leave, and arranged for transportation. He requisitioned a one-man cruiser equipped with warp-drive and plenty of charts.

He was heading for Bellatrix.

Just before he left, he requisitioned the data file on Charcot once again, to check something. Yes; the reward was fifty thousand dollars. He wondered if it still stood, after these thirty years.

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EVEN BY warp-drive, 215 light-years, takes a while to traverse. Brauer spent the time pleasantly, reading his collection of classics: Radin, Fell, Staub and Alexander, Caryl Chessman, Hornsfall and Wagley. They were part of his prized collection of 20th and 21st century criminology. Back then, he thought, a man had a chance to use his wits—not simply punch data in or out of a bunch of crytrons.

Crime, after all, was an irrational manifestation. It was foolish, then, to depend wholly on an inflexibly rational binary-orientated mind, or pseudo-mind, to make the top level decisions.

Take this business of Bellatrix, he thought. The silly search, over areas carefully preselected by T O T I V A C. Had any of the searchers bothered to deviate from the prescribed pattern? Probably not—and if they had, they probably had decided it would be unsafe to report such actions to the computer.

He emerged from warp uncomfortably close to Bellatrix itself. Brauer was not an experienced spaceman by any means, but a warpship was a simple device to operate. It had a built-in safety control that saw to it that its operator could do no wrong: in the event of a materialization in an impossible place (such as within a planet) no paradox would result; the ship would simply and swiftly demolecularize itself. In the event of a crash-landing, the ship was equipped with a device that would automatically radiate a distress-pulse on a wide-band carrier that could be picked up anywhere within a radius of twenty light-years.

HE POPPED back into normal space not far from Bellatrix I, which happened to be at aphelion: just as well, he decided. Even half a billion miles from Bellatrix was too close to suit him.

Brauer had a definite plan of action which called for a speedy survey of the six planets, more to familiarize himself with the territory than anything else, and then a finetoothing of his two prime suspects.

He therefore brought the ship into a c l o s e d orbit around Bellatrix I, for his first look-see. And it was fairly evident that if Charcot had landed here, he had not survived. Bellatrix I was similar in general appearance to the dayside of Sol I: its baked, blistered surface was airless and lifeless. Shimmering pools of metal lay on the sands, as on Mercury. Here, though, there was no dark side and no

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merciful twilight belt for an escaped convict to settle in: Bellatrix I rotated quite nicely on its axis, presenting each hemisphere in turn to the sun.

Brauer moved on. Bellatrix I held little promise.

He approached III next, since II was currently at the far end of its orbit. III was the low-mass world dominated by herbivores; Brauer allowed himself an amused chuckle at the thought of the Ecology prof who had gravely assured him that such a situation was impossible.

He scouted low; no sign of human inhabitation. Of course, on a quick buzz like that he had little expectation of uncovering Charcot. But III had already been covered fairly thoroughly by government searchers, and he trusted them to do a good job—within their limits.

Similarly II. TOTIVAC had directed them to search II, III, and VI. He was willing to assume they had done it properly.

The other three planets were different matters.

BRAUER took an interested look at Bellatrix II, moved on, buzzed barren IV, circled VI, and doubled back to V. As he had been warned, and as he expected, it was impossible—or at least certainly risky—to get too close to mighty V. A landing was out of the question.

Having been through the entire system, Brauer now drew back, locked the ship in a stable orbit, and, pacing the cabin, began to develop hypotheses.

"The computer," he said aloud somewhat selfconsciously, "is primarily rational. Having made the quasi-rational deduction that Charcot was somewhere in the Bellatrix system, it then proceeded to eliminate possibilities.

"Three of the planets are so unappealing that no man in his right mind would land on them. A fourth II—is inhabitable but scarcely satisfactory. The remaining two are possible choices for a man looking for a place to hide until the search for him died down.

"Item: Charcot stole a warpship. This tells the computer a number of things. One of them is that Charcot must have landed the ship voluntarily and not crashlanded somewhere, because had he crashlanded the ship, it would automatically have sent out distress signals. Since no distress signals were sent out, the ship did not crashland. *Ergo,* he either came out of warp in an impossible place and was demolecularized, or he landed safely on one of the inhabit-

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able words. Probability favors the latter. Therefore, the computer suggested that planets VI, III, and II be searched, in that order."

BRAUER smiled. The computer had acted in perfect sanity—with one mistake. It hadn't allowed for the possibility that a man might be so demented as to deliberately *remove* so integral a part of his ship's equipment as the automatic distress-signal. It was possible to do so, though inconceivable. But after all, what if Charcot had made a bad landing, crushed a tailfin or two, and the signal had gone off—bringing half-a-dozen unwanted patrol ships down on him in a flash?

It was possible for Brauer to proceed computer-fashion from that one alogical postulate. Assuming Charcot either landed safely or crashlanded on one of the Bellatrix worlds, then either he landed safely on one of the three habitable worlds, and thus would have been found by TOTIVAC's searchers—or he crashlanded on one of the other three planets.

Since Charcot had not been found by the TOTIVAC searchers, and since he would not voluntarily have landed on worlds I, IV, or V, the conclusion had to be that Charcot had crashlanded on one of those planets.

Brauer grinned smugly. It was pure deduction—unlike the celebrations of the legendary Mr. Holmes, whose alleged "deductions" were actually more induction. The only thing that remained was the proof.

Brauer thought feelingly of the poor dupes feeding into to TOTIVAC, back there in Upper Ontario. How they would envy him!

HE READIED himself for the search.

Here, too, he was able to winnow down his candidates with a little thought. Had Charcot crashlanded on either I or V, the evidence of his presence would long since have been erased by the elements. Furthermore, V was impossible for Brauer to search.

But IV, lonely, barren IV—

Had Charcot crashed there, amid the disinterested lichens, there would still be proof: the wrecked spaceship, tools, perhaps even the body. Brauer had the most to gain by Charcot's having crashed on IV, and so he chose IV to begin his search.

He expected searching to be a painstaking job. He calculated he could cover the entire land mass of the planet in broad sweeps and do the job

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properly in a month's time. Brauer was a patient man; he had many examples from the past as his guides to criminological technique.

No patience was needed, though. Luck, which is often scoffed at but which is a valid factor in detection, entered here—and, seventeen hours after his ship had entered the first of its search-maneuvers, Brauer's elaborate construction of guesswork and deduction was solidified when his mass-detectors recorded the presence of a spaceship crumpled on the rocks below.

A pulse thundered in his ears as he brought his ship down tenderly on Bellatrix IV's forbidding surface. It was a neat landing; atmospheric check reported the air breathable, and he rushed from his ship.

A HUNDRED yards away lay another one-man job, identical to his own. It had struck tail-first heavily, toppled, bashed its snout against an outcrop of what looked like dark basalt. Luckily it had landed hatch-upright, so its lone occupant had been able to clamber out. The hatch was open now.

Brauer approached, looked around for some sign of the skeleton. There was none; evidently Charcot had wandered for some distance over the bare, arid world before his food ran out.

Brauer photographed the ship from several angles, then hoisted himself up and climbed inside. He blinked in surprise. The interior didn't seem to have been empty thirty years. The ship looked lived-in. *How—?*

Then he saw how. The resourceful Charcot had somehow tucked a Karster food synthesizer away in the ship before blasting off. A man could live a long time with just a food synthesizer. To one side of the machine lay a little heap of crushed rocks; evidently Charcot had been feeding rock to the synthesizer's molecular converter and thus literally living off the planet.

Otherwise, the ship was bare—no tapes, no comforts, just a cradle and the synthesizer. Brauer lurked around until he had confirmed another of his theories—the distress signal device had been crudely but efficiently ripped loose.

He took careful photos, then climbed through the hatch again.

And gasped.

A thin, ancient-looking figure, bent and angular, with a shaggy yellow-white beard, was straggling across the barren plain toward the ship.

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Returning from a stroll, no doubt.

Charcot.

IT HAD to be Charcot. Thirty years of solitude had left their mark, but behind the dried skin and unkempt beard was still the sharp-eyed face of the shrewd young criminal pictured on the telefax sheet. Half-dizzy with incredulity, Brauer scrambled down the side of the ship, jumped—felt the impact of the rock jarring his feet—and hesitantly approached the old man.

It was not until they were twenty feet apart that the ancient showed any sign of having seen Brauer. Suddenly the old man paused, wobbled unsteadily on his feet, raised one gnarled hand, pointed from Brauer's ship to Brauer.

His dry lips worked. A harsh rumbling sound came forth; after much effort, the oldster managed to shape a tremulous word. *"You—you—"*

The effort and the shock was too great. He tottered, pivoted wildly, fell forward.

Brauer was galvanized out of his numbness. He ran to the old man, knelt, slid his hand inside the raged shirt, felt the bony chest.

Silence. The silence of death.

Brauer's finger encountered something folded beneath the old man's shirt; with trembling hands he drew it out and examined it. It was tattered, denigmented with age, but still legible. It was the telefax sheet with the photo of the escaped convict. Brauer glanced from the smirking youthful face to the old man's.

THERE WAS no doubt. This was Charcot. Somehow he had clung to life, with only the food sythesizer for a companion. He had been totally alone for thirty years, without so much as a book or a pet, on lifeless Bellatrix IV.

Brauer shuddered. No doubt, Charcot had believed he was gaining freedom when he broke out of the Correctory—but there, at least, he had been in humane hands, among men who would try to provide some sort of therapy and rehabilitation. Solitary confinement was curel, barbarous; penal codes had outlawed it decades earlier.

He had trapped himself in a prison without walls. He had lived here thirty years alone. His "freedom" had in actuality been a punishment more terrible than any court would mete out. The shock of seeing another living being again had killed him.

Broodingly, Brauer pocketed the tattered telefax sheet and kicked away a pebble.

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Then he shuffled back toward the o u t-j u t t i n g hill. There wasn't even any soil on the planet in which to bury Charcot. He began to gather rocks for the old man's cairn.

Later, he subradioed a simple message to the nearest pickup-point for TOTIVAC's data-collectors. It said: IN THE MATTER OF THE ESCAPE OF CHARCOT, EDWARD HAMMOND—THE CASE IS CLOSED.

DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM?

IN HIS REVIEWS of current hardcover mystery fiction, Curtis W. Casewit comes up with an interesting quotation from Helen McCloy's *"Two Thirds of A Ghost"*. According to Casewit, some character in the story says, "Haven't you understood the morbidity of criticism? ... The critic is always sick because he is a literary man who lives by destroying literature. He can't create, so his transmutes his frustration into agression.... He's a vitriol thrower who gets paid for it." One should not, of course, assume that an author's characters are necessarily expressing the author's views; and in this case, particularly, it is entirely irrelevant as to whether Mrs. McCloy agrees with her character. The point is that this is a very common opinion of critics and criticism, and like a great deal of "common knowledge" is fundamentally false and misleading.

Creative artists, of course (as B e r n a r d Shaw and others have pointed out), neither want nor like criticism: they merely want to be praised. The more astute and honest of them do not want lavish adulation; they rather want the type of understanding which makes allowances for any faults and flaws, finds them too inconsequential to dwell upon, and has sober, convincing praise for the balance.

Let us not snicker up our sleeves. We *all* want to be

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praised; we all want the kind of understanding which sees beyond our peccadillos and follies to the real, praiseworthy and lovable selves beneath surface defects...

THE AUTHOR, stinging under the skilled judgment of the critic (for that, as Jay Tyler noted, is what the word from which "criticism" is derived means—*criticos: skilled judgment)* has two grounds on which he tries to take comfort. If the critic is not an author himself, then he's frustrated because he can't create, and is taking it out on his betters; if the critic *is* an author, then he's just jealous of his competition.

If authors really believed either one of these facile explanations, then you'd hear far fewer howls of anguish; such closed circles of irrational logic, when believed in, leave the believer in a state of imperturbability—and imperturbable artists are rather few, I think.

All this applies equally to partisans of particular authors, of fans of particular types of art or fiction; and science fiction fans and writers are no more innocent of critic-burning than anyone else. This, too, is understandable enough. Who likes to have something he loves examined with merciless scrutiny, and each and every defect noted in detail?

The subject was brought forcibly to my mind at the Philadelphia Conference last November, when Sam Moskowitz stated that Damon Knight was the "destructive" kind of critic.

THE ISSUE is one that covers the entire field of literary criticism, but Knight might as well be our guinea pig; let's turn some skilled judgment upon him, where he is fulfilling the functions of a critic. He's "destructive", it is said; very well: *what is he trying to destroy?*

We have Exhibit A, a volume entitled "In Search Of Wonder". Now in chapter three of this book, we find quotations illustrating the critic's contention that, in "The Blind Spot", Austin Hall's command of English was far from commanding. In fact, it is proven that Hall's writing was barely literate. Having read "The Blind Spot" within the last few years, I know full well that the snippets given are entirely representative of the author. Hall used words and phrases in a pretensious, rheturically expansive manner but clearly did not know what he was writing about. His attempts at profundity were pathetic in the awkward style he affected. Which now is is "destruc-

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tive" to science fiction? Is it not reviewer who proclaims such fumbling "classic"—thus suggesting that the "best" of science fiction is written by incompetent hacks, and its enthusiasts are too ignorant to tell the difference between good writing and inferior gush? What is destructive about the critic who recognizes semi-illiteracy when he sees it and makes very clear that this sort of thing is *not* the basis for contending that science fiction is worth serious attention?

IN THE SAME chapter, Knight shows that Mullen's "Kinsmen of the Dragon" has an "idiot plot". (It's the kind of story which achieves full length only because everyone in it behaves like an idiot; you see it daily on TV. If someone just used a little intelligence, the problem would be solved in no time at all, and the story would be over.)

Is stating such a fact "destructive?" Or were the reviewers who greeted this novel with shouts of "Hoo Boy!" "Great!", thus proclaiming that great science fiction was as stupid as soap operas, the destructive ones?

In Chapter Nine, there is a demonstration of the absence of internal logic and in Sohl's "Point Ultimate," and the downright ignorance of the basic science in Bellamy's "Atta". Would it have been "constructive" simply to have ignored the facts in the case? Isn't the critic who praises such performances destroying the very basis on which fans are trying to establish respect for science fiction?

I feel strongly enough about such matters myself not to strive for subtlety at this point, but rather answer these questions straight out. *Yes, there are destructive critics in science fiction: they are the so-called "critics" who praise bad writing, badly-constructed stories, illogical and irrational plots, and ignorance of, or indifference to fundamental scientific principles—upon which the stories are supposed to be constructed.*

It is possible to enjoy a story with any of these faults; I admit to low taste myself, in that respect. But there's a difference between indulging low taste in one's private reading and proclaiming publicly that such mediocrity is really great stuff.

So much for "destructive" criticism.

BUT IS THERE, you may ask, such a thing as "constructive" criticism? There is indeed, and you will find it in the very corpus of what is called "destructive" criticism.

[*turn to page* 120]

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The In-Betweens

by Richard Wilson

(author of "One Man's Inch")

Dr. Antioch's discovery resulted in one Robert Blane becoming the most ubiquitous man ever. (Notes: If you've forgotten the meaning of the word, "ubiquitous", as your editor had, that's all to the good. Don't look up, until you've read this story, please!)

THE CHAPLAIN said, "I'm a man of God, not a man of science, so I'll be able to tell you only part of what you ought to know."

Then he had to leap back to avoid the fist that swung at him through the bars.

"There's no reason for you to try to hurt me," he said. "I'm only trying to make you understand why you're here."

"I'll kill you," said the man behind the bars. His face was contorted by hate as he strained to reach the other, who stood just out of range.

"There's been enough killing," the chaplain said.

"Let there be one more, Padre," the prisoner said mockingly. "Let it be you."

"You're evil," the chaplain said unemotionally. "You're all evil, literally. You killed the doctor and the others. It wasn't your fault, but it was you who did it and you must pay for it, under society's law. I'll try to explain that to you, if you'll listen."

He wondered if there was a shred of tortured sanity left in the prisoner. He sought it in the blazing eyes but could find only blind hate.

"I'll kill," the prisoner said. "That's what I do best. I'll ex-

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"Listen, and I'll explain it all to you..."

plain that to *you*, if *you'll* listen."

"All right," the chaplain said. He seemed gratified at the response. "I don't want to monopolize the explanations. I'll listen to you first and then you listen to me."

"I've killed with a gun and with a club, but the best way is with the hands. Then it's all you doing the killing, nothing intermediate. That brings the most satisfaction. It eases the pressure longest."

"I pray God will have mercy on your soul."

THE PRISONER spat. "Pray for yourself. I'll kill you if I can. With my hands. I'll strangle you till you're purple, then I'll give you air for a moment and let your eyes sink back into their sockets. Then I'll strangle you again, my thumbs in your windpipe. Suddenly you'll be limp. Then you'll be dead and I'll feel at peace, briefly."

"There are other ways to find peace."

"None so good. There is torture, but it is too subtle for me. I am not a subtle man. The fine points of inflicting pain do no interest me. It is only in the climax that I find satisfaction. While you live, however painfully, I am frustrated. Death and death alone provides fulfillment."

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"You are articulate, at least."

"I know my needs."

"Do you know why?" the chaplain asked.

"No. I've told you I'm not interested in subtleties. Does the starving man inquire into the makings of a loaf of bread? Does a drowning man ask why a life preserver floats?"

"I believe what you say, much as I deplore it. But you should know why you're as you are. There may be some comfort in it. Or maybe only remorse. Anything would be better than unalloyed hate. Do you know *who* you are?"

"Robert Blane. A meaningless name. It would be more appropriate if it were Samuel Hall. Did he really exist?"

"Samuel Hall?"

" 'My name is Samuel Hall. I hate you one and all — damn your eyes.' "

"I don't know. I think he existed, but that a legend was built up around him. You sound almost as if you have a sense of humor."

"I HAVE NO humor. I killed the humorous one."

"So you did. Do you remember his name?"

"No."

"It was Robert Blane," the chaplain said. "You killed him first."

"I didn't know he had the same name. It wouldn't have mattered, of course. I shot him. Grinning and laughing all the time. I think he was the worst."

"What do you remember before that?"

"There weren't any before that," Blane said. "I killed the others later."

"I don't mean the killings," the chaplain said. "Don't you remember a time when you didn't want to kill?"

"I woke up wanting to kill."

"Before you woke up."

"Was there a before? I don't know."

"Do you know how old you are, Robert?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Do you remember anything of the first twenty-seven years of your life?"

"I was twenty-eight when I woke up," Blane insisted.

"But twenty-eight years ago you were *born*."

"I suppose I was; I know a great many things that I didn't learn actively after I woke up. There must have been some kind of life before that. But all this talk bores me. Come in a little closer, Padre. My hunger to kill is growing more acute."

"One would almost think you were joking. But I'll stay where I am while I tell you what made you wake up at

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the age of twenty-eight at Lost Oaks."

LOST OAKS was an estate. The great house in the center of its fifty-odd acres was built in the boom years of the twenties, abandoned by its once-wealthy owner in the depression years, and sold for taxes in the forties. To reach it you drove sixty miles out of the city on a main highway, followed a second-class road for ten miles beyond the reservoir, an unimproved road for four miles more, then turned off that onto a private dirt road that ended at locked iron gates in a high stone fence.

Dr. Norvell Antioch was the man who had bought Lost Oaks for taxes. It was when he retired, that he went there to live, taking with him from the faculty of the university a worshipful young laboratory assistant, Robert Blane. Antioch told Blane he had picked him to be his colleague, but instead he made him his guinea pig.

Antioch also took from the university a belief that cellular matter contained within itself all the attributes of the organism as a whole. He believed that a living cell, taken from the muscle tissue of the forearm, for instance, had the makings not only of other forearm muscle tissue cells, but that the cells, properly fed, could reproduce themselves and that the resulting colonies eventually could be persuaded to take the form of the whole creature.

And Dr. Antioch, who had spent forty years studying the nucleolus, the dense area inside a cell's nucleus, thought he knew, finally, how to persuade it to do just that.

FORTUNATELY, he had a private income, in addition to his pension, to help him devote the rest of his life to this goal.

Robert Blane gladly gave up the cells from his forearm and helped Antioch pare one of them down to the linin network. Antioch took it from there, alone.

Blane was kept busy thereafter with the mental work of a housekeeper, and Antioch kept a sloppy house. There were twenty-two rooms, from cellar to attic, and Antioch used every one of them. He slept in one, ate in another, did his reading and kept his journals in a third, relaxed with recordings or motion picture films in others, cluttered up the bathrooms, threw his dirty clothes out in the hall and, in general, behaved like a pig.

Poor, devoted Blane cleaned up after him many hours each day. He prepared the meals,

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did the dishes, fetched supplies from town in the station wagon, saw that two generators were switched over every twenty-four hours—a crotchet of Antioch's—to guard against an electricity failure, stacked away the phonograph records, rewound the films and did the laundry.

It was backbreaking work and only rarely did Blane find time to visit the lab to see how the experiment was coming along.

IT WAS COMING along very well. Antioch, pig though he was in his personal habits, was a demon biologist. He had got down to the nucleolus. What he did next, exactly, was described in the code Antioch used in his journals.

What he ended up with, as far as any layman could see, was half a dozen small covered glass dishes. Whatever was in them certainly was growing, because, from week to week, it had to be transferred to larger dishes, then to deep jars and finally to huge vats.

Blane had run all around the county in the station wagon looking for vats of suitable size and shape and when he'd found them he'd had to lug them up the two flights of stairs to the lab by himself. Antioch never allowed any outsider beyond the gates of Lost Oaks.

Blane huffed and sweated and got the vats in place, then was locked out while Antioch transferred the contents of the jars to the vats. Blane listened outside the door and heard a sloshing sound. Antioch was talking to himself and the sloshes punctuated his almost inaudible monologue. Blane waited for the sixth slosh, then had to go to his room and lie down. His heart was hammering from the exertion of carrving the huge vats upstairs.

Blane died the next day, as he was carrying a basketful of wet wash from the tubs to the clothesline. Antioch cursed when he found the body. He buried it, grudgingly and not very deep, a few steps from where it had fallen.

ANTIOCH went directly back to the lab. He must have been a little off by this time.

"Die on me, will you?" he said to the semicircle of vats. "No matter. One Robert Blane is gone—but I'll soon have six more."

He chuckled and mumbled as he went from one vat to another, carefully measuring out something green and liquid and pouring it onto the semi-gelatinous blob of each. He stepped

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back then and said over his shoulder, as if to the ghost of his late assistant: "That's you all over, Robert Blane." He chuckled again as a phrase struck him. "The ubiquitous you!"

He gave each vat a final inspection for the morning and went up to the attic for an hour's relaxation in his film library. On the way he unbuttoned his stained smock and dropped it behind him in the hall.

When the creatures were full size, Antioch slid them from the vats onto a portable table and washed them off. Antioch weighed them. Each was 145 pounds. They were exactly alike in build and muscular development; they were duplicates of the late Robert Blane in every way but one. Their faces were different, each from the other, although they had a family resemblance.

ANTIOCH fretted over that, but not for long. It was a minor flaw in a major achievement.

He started them breathing with a pulmotor but they didn't waken immediately. He trundled each to a separate room. He'd been so confident of success that he'd prepared the rooms and bought clothing for them. Robert Blane, the original, had been fitted at the tailor shop. He'd wondered at the time why Antioch was buying him a dozen suits, and wondered later why he'd never seen them again after they'd been delivered.

Antioch grunted and sweated and got each of the men in a bed. Then he gave each an injection which, among other things, would result in their waking at separate times so he could observe their individual reactions.

The study was a mess. Antioch grumbled around and finally located his journal under a pile of papers in an armchair. He sat down with it at his desk and was making a coded entry when he heard footsteps in the hall. He whirled in his chair and saw the door open.

One of the new Robert Blanes came in, smiling broadly. He walked confidently toward Antioch.

Antioch took a revolver out of the desk drawer and said, "Just stay where you are."

Blane laughed. "That's a gun, isn't it?" He veered away from Antioch and sat down in a chair, first pushing a stack of books off it onto the floor.

"I know what a gun is and I assure you you won't have to use it on me," he said. "I know lots of things in a general way, but"—he chuckled—

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"when it comes to particulars I'm pretty vague."

Antioch still held the revolver, but he rested it in his lap when Blane sat down. "That's interesting," he said. "Just what do you know in particular?"

BLANE LAUGHED again. There were furrows in his cheeks which suggested a great deal of past laughter and crinkles at the corners of his eyes. His attitude, even as he sat relaxed in the chair, was one of tremendous good will and vitality.

"In particular," Blane said, "I know I'm Robert Blane and that I'm twenty-eight years old. I know it's good to be alive. That's about all." He laughed again. "Silly, isn't it, to be so lacking in vital statistics? I don't know who you are, or where I am, or how I got here. I suppose I've had a touch of amnesia."

"You might say so," Antioch said. "What do you know about biology?"

"Biology? That's a science, isn't it? Must have had a bit of it in school, but I can't remember for sure. Can't even remember having gone to school, though I must have, mustn't I?" He laughed. "Embarrassing, in a way. Is this an institution?"

"Not exactly," Antioch said. "I'll be right here."

"Do you know how to drive a car? Can you operate a generator?"

"A car? Why, yes. I can't remember having driven one but somehow I know I can. And the same thing applies to a generator. I can run one, I'm sure."

"Motor skills retained," Antioch muttered. "But no carry-over of specific intellectual training. Though I dare say your motor skill would take charge if I were to ask you to cut up a frog. But personality? That isn't Blane's personality at all. He was no laughing boy."

"*Laughing Boy*, by Oliver LaFarge," said the new Blane. "A novel, about Indians. *Laughing Boy Blues*, by Woody Herman, a swing record. More generalized knowledge, I suppose? But I don't know your name. Should I?"

"Antioch." He looked at the amiable man, then got up. "I don't know why you woke so early. But if you did the others might, too. I'd better go see. Stay here."

"Of course, Mr. Antioch," Blane said agreeably. "There are others, then? The more the merrier, I always say."

"You don't know the half of it," the old man said grimly. "And it's *Doctor* Antioch."

"Anything you say, Doctor. I'll be right here."

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ANTIOCH hurried out of the room, looking anxiously at his watch.

He hadn't been gone long when another Robert Blane came into the study. This one was scowling. He wore pants, an undershirt, shoes and socks only, in contrast to the amiable man, who had dressed meticulously, with the tie neat between the collar points and suit jacket buttoned.

The scowling man said, "Who the hell are you?"

"An amnesia victim," the other said cheerfully. "Dr. Antioch is treating me. Come in, come in."

"I *am* in. I don't need any grinning idiot to tell me what to do." He went to the desk and pawed through the papers on it. He pulled open drawers and in the bottom one he found a revolver, a mate to the one Antioch had taken. He hefted the weapon with satisfaction.

"DR. ANTIOCH might not like you going through his desk that way," the amiable man said with an ingratiating smile. "Might have his little secrets, you know." He laughed.

The scowling man whirled on him. "Don't tell me what to do, you hyena!" he yelled.

The other continued to laugh. "That's good," he said. "Dr. Antioch called me Laughing Boy and you say I'm a hyena. That's another laughing animal, you know. That's very good." His laughter rolled out.

"Stop that!" The scowling man swung the revolver so it pointed at the other's chest. "Nobody laughs at me."

"I can't help it. You look so droll now, like the late Humphrey Bogart being a menace." Peals of laughter came from him. "All right, Louie, drop the gun." He laughed and laughed.

The shot doubled him over. His last laugh became a gurgle as he slumped in the chair.

"Nobody laughs at Robert Blane," his killer said.

The shot brought Dr. Antioch at a run. He came around the doorway with his revolver in his hand and jerked it up when he saw the scowling man. He was too late; the bullet caught him in the heart and he fell with a little moan.

Robert Blane, the killer, inspected the bodies for signs of life. He found none. He eased into the hallway, cautiously. It was empty. Pointing the revolver ahead of him, he walked down the hall, swerving at each open door.

He found no one and became bolder. There was one more door before the stairway at the end of the hall and he approached it carelessly. As he went by a hand thrust out. It was holding a stove poker,

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which cracked on Blane's wrist. The gun fell.

"I want that," the man with the poker said. He was a duplicate of Blane, but his features were sharper, his eyes narrower. His lips were pulled back in a greedy smile and his whole expression was one of acquisitiveness.

HE STOPPED and retrieved the revolver. Blane lunged at him in the same instant and fell across the bent back. The other straightened and Blane went over his shoulder and fell in a heap behind him. He must have fallen on his injured wrist because he howled with pain.

The other whirled and covered him with the revolver. He held it in his right hand, having transferred the poker to his left.

Blane leaped to his feet but then stood still, looking at the gun and the man behind it.

They were in a room that was a miniature museum. There were oil paintings on the wall and statuary in the corners. Here and there stood glass cases displaying pottery and ancient jewelry.

"Who are you?" asked Robert Blane, massing his wrist and scowling. "Another laughing one?"

"I'm Robert Blane," the other said, "and I hardly ever laugh. Who are you?"

"I'm Robert Blane."

"What?" the other said. "You took my name? You can't have it!" His thin features trembled with emotion. He edged toward the other, the gun quivering in his fist.

THE SCOWLING man moved backward until he was stopped by a mantlepiece. His hand groped along it and found a bronze figurine, one of a pair.

"Put that down," the greedy man said. "I want that, too." He jerked forward and picked up the mate to it with the hand holding the poker. He managed to get it into his coat pocket, then transferred the poker to his right armpit. With his free hand he began gathering up other knickknacks from the mantlepiece and stuffing them into his pockets.

"These are mine," the greedy man said. "All of them. You give that back, do you hear? I need it. It goes with the other one and I want both of them."

As he spoke his eyes found a display of cut stones in a glass case. He trembled at the sight of the treasure and used the revolver to smash the case. He smashed it repeatedly until the glass lay in splinters in the case and on the floor.

He began scooping up the stones with his left hand, but was able to take only a few at

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a time. Panting and shaking, he used his right hand, too, but the revolver made it awkward. He thrust the weapon into his pocket and used both hands to take the stones.

Then Robert Blane, the killer, laid open the skull of the greedy man with the bronze figurine.

The lazy man had not stirred from the bed in which he'd awakened. Robert Blane killed him there, more as a matter of inertia than of plan.

ROBERT THE GOOD awoke with a minimum of memories but with a sense of well-being that made him smile as he stretched in his bed. After a while he got up and dressed in the clothing he found in the closet.

He opened the door, then stopped as he heard the sound that was the dying gasp of the lazy man in the adjoining room. He looked into the room as the killer stepped back, panting from the emotion of the murder.

Robert the Good moved backwards softly, then turned and walked to a bend in the hall, where he stopped and watched. The killer came into the hall. He looked weary. He massaged the back of his neck and, with his head bent, went to his room.

Robert the Good crept to the open doorway. The killer had thrown himself face down on his bed and was already asleep.

The good man went to the room of the lazy man. Tears came to his eyes as he examined the corpse. He crossed the hands on the chest and pulled the sheet up over the face. He said a prayer.

He explored the rest of the house and found the other three corpses. He did what he could to make them less ugly in death.

Robert the Good visited the room where the vats had spawned him and the other five. Some uncoded notes left by Dr. Antioch lay in a corner where they had fallen unnoticed. He read them. He made another tour of the great house and bit by bit began to know what had happened.

Somewhere there was another Robert Blane, in addition to the dead ones, their killer and himself. He went back to the hall that led to his room and behind one of the closed doors he found the sixth Robert Blane still asleep.

Robert the Good closed the door behind him and, finding no lock, placed a chair under the knob. He awoke the sleeper.

LATER, IN the laboratory, Robert the Good said: "That's why I got you out of

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there so fast. Here's your tie, if you want to finish dressing."

"A homicidal maniac?" the other asked, buttoning his shirt.

"Strictly speaking, no. Not a maniac. He's a killer because he was made that way. The other parts of his personality—the ones that would balance or cancel out the killer instinct that may be in everyone—have been distributed among the other five of us. As I've reconstructed it, he'd killed Greed, Laughter and Sloth, which dominated three of his other selves, and Dr. Antioch."

"That would leave two other duplicates of the original Robert Blane. You're one of them, I suppose. Which one?"

"I seem to be the good one," Robert the Good said, "basing the premise on an admittedly short period of self-analysis. Now the question remains—which one are you?"

The other had knotted his tie into a wide Windsor. He let Robert the Good help him into his coat.

"I'm not one of you, I'm sure," he said, adjusting the length of his shirt cuffs. "My name is Hillary Manchester."

ROBERT THE GOOD smiled indulgently. "Your name is Robert Blane, the same as the rest of us. It's a disappointment to you that you're not the good one; I can understand that. But then you're not the evil one, either. Apparently you're amoral, which is unfortunate. But that's only the lack of an attribute. We must try to learn what your dominant characteristic is, Robert."

"Hillary Manchester's the name," the other said. "You may call me Hillary. And you needn't be so smug about being good, if that's what you are. Goodness unrelieved by any other trait can be pretty insufferable."

"We've no time to quarrel. It really doesn't matter what you choose to call yourself. What we've got to do is team up and overcome the killer. Otherwise he'll pick us off separately."

"You say he's killed four people already. How do you know?"

"I'll show you the corpses, if you like."

"I grant you there are corpses," Hillary said. "My point is that they weren't necessarily all killed by the same man. Some of them might have killed each other. Lord knows this place is weird enough for anything to have happened." He looked around at the vats. "As apparently it did."

Robert the Good furrowed his forehead. "It's true that I have no proof that they were all killed by the same man, but

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somehow I know they were. It's as if there were some kind of link among all us duplicated men. As if the common cell from which we sprang gave us a common memory. You and I must have that faculty, then. Do I communicate anything to you? Do you get anything from me?"

"Only a lot of blather. I've told you I'm not one of your biological freaks. I'm Hillary Manchester, the—the explorer and big game hunter, among other things." He managed to look at Robert as if from a height, though they were of identical build.

"You're Robert the Liar, possibly," Robert the Good muttered to himself.

"I CAME HERE last night when my car broke down," Hillary said, not listening. "I had been on my way to a lecture engagement. Dr. Antioch was kind enough to put me up. As an overnight guest I suppose I have certain obligations, but they don't include participating in a manhunt. Especially when that man may be an innocent victim."

"What do you mean?" Robert the Good asked.

"What proof do I have that *you're* not the killer?"

Robert the Good drew himself up righteously. "You have my word," he said. "And if that isn't sufficient, you have only to wait till the killer awakes. Or go wake him, if you're foolish enough, and see whether he strangles you on the spot."

Hillary fingered his neck. "I suppose I have to trust you. But if he's asleep, why don't we go and truss him up now, while we have the chance?"

"Mainly because it's taken me this long to persuade you that you are involved, distasteful as it may be to the mind of one who claims he is a Hillary Manchester. Another reason is that we can't afford to make a mistake. When he's aroused all his energies flow into his killing instinct and he may be able to overcome both of us, who lack that drive."

"You're afraid of him, then."

"Only afraid we might fail unless we planned it carefully. *We* know what he is; but if he overcomes us, he'll go out among people who do not know him. Then he might kill dozens before he was captured."

HILLARY MANCHESTER leaned against a vat. "I'm reminded of the time I trapped a man-eating tiger in India," he said. "The beast had been raiding the village, killing goats and sometimes people. You may have read my account in the publication of the Adven-

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turers Club. *A Beast There Was,* I called it."

"Pathological," Robert the Good commented to himself.

"I've made quite a name for myself as a writer of crime fiction, too," Hillary went on. "You're probably familiar with my private detective character, Ace Hillary, nemesis of crime. Fourteen novels, dozens of short stories and five—no, six films. Radio and television, too, of course. I recall the time a rich old recluse was burned to death in the cupola of his mansion. Accidental, the police supposed, and were prepared to close the case when I arrived on the scene."

"Listen, Hillary—"

"Call me Ace. Everyone does. So I said to the chief of police, 'There's more to this than meets the eye, Chief.' I said to him, 'I smell murder here—murder for gain—and I'd like you to round up all the old man's heirs. When I've done questioning them you'll have your killer.'"

"Walter Mitty," Robert the Good said. "Out of the sixth vat."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing."

"Oh. Well, needless to say—But this is neither here nor there, is it? The problem here is to capture your killer for you. Now—old Ace is clicking right along—here's what we'll do. In the hall outside his room..."

Robert the Good listened resignedly. Even the help of this—this protean man, who changed personalities at the swerve of a conversation, would be better than no help at all.

ACE HILLARY MANCHESTER, or whoever he was (Robert the Good had no doubt that he was Robert Blane VI, multiple personality), was busy booby-trapping the basement stairs.

"The—simplest—snare is always the best," Hillary said. "I apply this bear grease"—it was really jellied soap—"to every second step. We know which ones to use—the first, third, fifth, and so on. But our friend the killer, in hot pursuit, gets his legs skidded out from under him and crashes down in a heap. Then he's ours."

"Oh, fine," said Robert the Good impatiently. "But why would he be chasing us? Why wouldn't he just shoot us?"

"Because," Hillary said, "he wouldn't have any guns; we'll have taken them away from him."

"If that's the case, why wouldn't we have him right then? Cover him with the guns and march him off to the authorities?"

"Think of yourself as being in Africa, with a pistol, a cage

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and a killer lion. Is the lion going to slink into the cage simply because he's covered by your little gun? No. He's going to rush you. Same thing here. Ol' Killer Bob is going to come raging at us, no matter how much artillery we've got trained on him. So we've got to decoy him down here and hope that when he slips he lands on his head. If that doesn't knock him out so we can tie him up we've got to use Plan Two. How's the net coming?"

"I'M UNTANGLING it," Robert the Good said. "But isn't he going to notice it, all spread out at the bottom of the steps?"

"Never. The smell of blood will be too heady in his nostrils."

"Whose blood?"

"Nobody's. Figure of speech. So—the thrill of the hunt sends him pounding down here after us, he slips, falls, lands in the net and if that doesn't knock him out, we tangle him up. Check?"

"I guess so," Robert the Good said doubtfully. "Couldn't we just call the police?"

"Never. Get his wind up. He'd be out and gone at the first flat footfall. Besides, you forget that old Ace Hillary is here. Always gets his man. Reminds me of a time in Blackpool, when the Yard called me in for consultation..."

DUSK HAD come as they finished their preparations. At the top of the basement stairs they clicked off the light and crept silently through the darkening halls.

"Have you got the flashlight?" Robert the Good whispered.

"Yes, yes. Leave it to me, now. You don't have to do anything except stand by and, when the time comes, run like hell."

They reached the killer's door and listened. They heard nothing. Silently Hillary turned the knob and opened the door an inch. Then he kicked the door inward and stabbed the flashlight beam at the bed.

"We've come for you, Killer Bob!" Hillary thundered.

But the beam was shining on an empty bed. Their quarry was not in his room. "Oh, dear," Hillary said.

"There are the guns," Robert the Good said more practically. "He's left them behind." He picked up the revolvers from a corner where the killer had apparently tossed them. He gave one to Hillary.

"Where do you suppose he is?" Hillary asked.

"He could be anywhere. Maybe he's eating. The kitch-

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en's one flight down, in the back."

He wasn't in the kitchen, either, but he had been there. A platter on the table had a gnawed ham bone on it and there were other signs that someone had raided the refrigerator. They themselves ate, realizing they were hungry, and as they discussed what to do next it began to rain.

DR. ANTIOCH had lived well. The refrigerator was crammed with leftovers the frugal Blane had saved and, next to it, an upright freezer held provisions enough for months.

The rain, carried by a gusty wind, pelted the kitchen window. "Time to be wary," Hillary said. "He could sneak up on us under cover of the elements. Time to move."

"Stop talking like one of your mythical books," Robert the Good said, irritated in spite of himself. "But I suppose you're right. Let's try the attic. He could be up there."

"What's in the attic?"

"You know as well as I do. But if you must pretend, it's Dr. Antioch's film library. He was a collector of classic films. Had almost as good a library as the Modern Museum."

"An old-time-movie buff, eh? I guess it takes all kinds. Projector and all?"

"Yes."

"I wonder if any of mine are up there. *Calling Ace Hillary* is my favorite. Huston did that one. Let's go up."

Robert the Good sighed and led the way.

THEY HEARD a voice and paused on the stairs. It wasn't the evil man's voice, Robert the Good knew. It had a tinny, mechanical sound to it.

"It's Vince Barnett!" Hillary Manchester whispered.

"Who?"

"It's a movie. The telephone booth scene from *Scarface*. Listen." There was a burst of machine-gun fire. "Ol' Killer Bob is getting his violence vicariously. Everybody was in that one—Paul Muni, Georgie Raft, Boris Karloff. Listen. Poor old Vince is dying now, but he's still trying to take the message. Now's our chance."

"You mean rush him?" They crept up to the door.

"Right. His eyes'll be glued to the screen. I'll yank open the door. You rush in—you know the way. He'll jump at you. I'll slip in unnoticed and clobber him from behind."

"I'm not so sure that's—"

But Hillary had pulled open the door and pushed the other inside.

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ROBERT BLANE, the killer, was sitting in one of the half dozen upholstered chairs. The only light was coming from the projector behind him and the square of screen at the other end of the room.

Robert the Good tripped over a folding wooden chair that went down with a clatter. The killer jumped up, Hollywood's violence forgotten. He leaped on the prone form, secured a throat-hold and hauled his namesake erect.

Hillary crawled silently across the room. Something on a mantlepiece caught his eye in the dimness. He lifted it, hefted it, then made his way toward the two men struggling in and out of the projector's beam. Hillary swung one, felt a crunch as of a skull, then swung again for good measure. The struggle ended.

Hillary held his weapon up in the beam, silhouetting it against Paul Muni. It was a lead copy of an Academy Awards Oscar. It had served.

THE MAN in the garb of a chaplain said:

"And so you must pay, Robert the Killer Blane. Society demands it."

"You're no society. Where are the cops?"

"There are no police at Lost Oaks. We are a world—and a law—unto ourselves here. These bars aren't a jail; Dr. Antioch once kept an ape here. Now they restrain you, though I would have preferred the ape."

"Come closer, Padre. Let me feel your throat."

"It's you who will die, my poor lost friend, not I. What means would you prefer? The pistol at the base of the skull? The noose? The electric chair, I'm afraid, is more than Lost Oaks can offer."

"You wouldn't kill me, you sanctimonious son; you're too holy."

"Poison, perhaps? It's rather painful. How about drowning?"

"Trying to give me a little hell on earth, Padre? Quit moralizing and call the cops."

The other wrote something on a pad. He'd done it before.

"What's that?" the caged man asked. "What are you writing?"

"Oh, you're curious, are you? Just a bit of dialogue. Yours, as a matter of fact. Rather good. I always strive for authenticity."

"Playing father confessor, you fake? You're no priest. You're just something out of a vat. I'll make a bargain with you, fellow experiment. Let me go and you can play-act in your turned-around collar till the saints come home. I don't have to kill you. There are others."

"No bargains with the devil."

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THE CAGED man lunged, his hands reaching through the bars.

The other stepped back, smiling. "You're right about one thing. I am play-acting. You knew I was no priest, but here's something you didn't know — I'm not even Robert the Good."

The killer stared, his hands gripping the bars.

"You begin to see the implications of that? You said you didn't have to kill me. But I have to kill you, and I can. I have no sanctimonious compunctions. I'm not a pure killer, like you, but I'm no saint, either. Amoral, Robert the Good called me. You see, I'm the one out of the sixth vat."

He yanked off his collar. The caged man shuddered. With hate only? Or was there a trace of fear, as well?

The protean man went on: "I pretended with our good friend that I was Hillary Manchester, explorer-lecturer-writer. That was mostly to irritate him, he was rather stuffy. I don't have to pretend with you any more. I've picked your brains and taken what I need. Sure, I'm Robert Blane— and soon I'll be the sole survivor of the six of us. You've got to go, Killer Bob."

"Where's the good one?" There was a trace of panic in the killer's voice.

"Apparently you failed to notice my careful use of the past tense. Good grammer is also a characteristic of my books. Robert the Good has gone to his reward, poor fellow."

"You killed him?"

"OH, PURELY by accident. I was the one who hit you over the head up there at the theater party. Then I swung again, for the *coup de grace*. Unfortunately Good Robert's head got in the way. He was still among us while I hauled you down here to the celler but when I got back he had breathed his last, the dear soul."

The protean man, Robert Blane VI, the multiple personality, said: "So it's just you and me, old buddy, and pretty soon it'll be just me — Robert Ace Hillary Manchester Blane. I think I'll poison you, friend. Doc Antioch had quite a collection of the stuff. I'll put it in your food or your water, or both, and you can die that way or starve to death. I'm not particular. Good-by for now, Killer Bob. See you at feeding time."

"Wait!" the other called, but Robert Blane VI was gone.

ROBERT THE killer died of neither poison nor starvation. On the morning of the

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third day, as Blane-Hillary arrived with a breakfast consisting of a bowl of oatmeal sprinkled with sugar and strychnine and a glass of milk laced with chloral hydrate, he found his prisoner hanging by the neck from his belt, which he had looped around one of the high horizontal bars.

Hillary, fearing a trap, merely set the tray down near the cage, as he had on each of the previous days, and went away. Twenty-four hours later, when he returned and found everything exactly as he had left it, he took down and disposed of the body.

HILLARY MANCHESTER-BLANE, the noted biochemist, hummed as he worked.

His alter ego, the crack cryptographer, had been useful, his skills making the study on Dr. Antioch's coded journals a mere matter of sight translation.

A third facet of the man paused occasionally to write something down in a notebook.

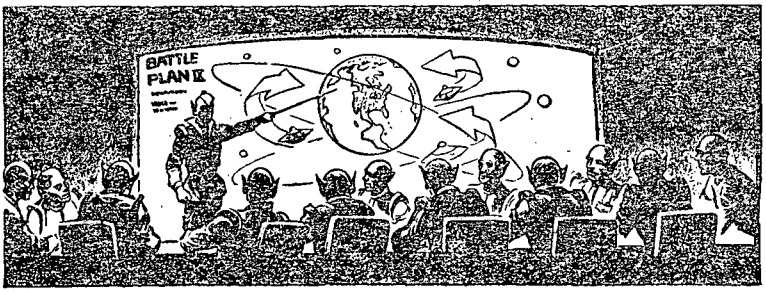
Manchester-Blane, humming contentedly, worked defted with the linin network, resisting the urge to scratch his bandaged forearm which had yielded the muscle tissue cells.

Next stop nucleolus. The half dozen small covered dishes were ready. So were the jars and vats.

Hillary Manchester was getting ready to repopulate Lost Oaks.

One thing he'd have to remember, though. Hillary the Killer must never be allowed to wake up. He could do without Hillary the Good, too. The four in-betweens, and himself, would be enough. A good amoral lot.

He supposed he was really doing all this for his favorite self, Ace Hillary. There ought to be a good story in it.



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More Mad Men Of Science

Special Feature

by L. Sprague de Camp

illustrated by Orban

IN AN EARLIER article*, I noted that while the world-wrecking "mad scientist" of fiction just doesn't exist, and never did exist, there have been numerous real-

* "Mad Men of Science", *Future Science Fiction*, Number 31.

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The harmless type of "screwy inventor", announcing discovery after discovery, has existed in real life.

life scientists who were notably erratic.

A notable paranoid was Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), a tall thin, Mephistophelian-looking creature from Smiljan, Croatia. After a Continental education, Tesla worked for the Continental Edison Company in Paris. He was an extreme individualist, who spent much of his life haughtily walking out on jobs because he thought he had been wronged or slighted. This time it was an argument over an expense-account. Charles Batchelor, Edison's old partner and now an executive of the French Edison company, gave Tesla an introduction to Edison and told him to go to America.

Edison took on Tesla with misgivings because of Tesla's enthusiasm for alternating current (this was during the Battle of the Currents, with Edison fanatically fighting for d.c.) and his habit of doing everything in his head. Tesla offered to improve Edison's generators. Edison said: "There's fifty thousand dollars in it for you if you can do it."

Tesla did and demanded his money. Edison said: "Tesla, you don't understand our American humor." Tesla quit again.

Tesla meanwhile had been smitten with the idea of the induction or squirrel-cage polyphase motor, one of the most important inventions in alternating-current machinery. Now he found backers, who enabled him to set up his own company. Edison's rival, George Westinghouse, came to look at the motor and offered Tesla a million dollars plus royalty. Tesla took it. For a while he worked for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh, but quit in his usual huff when Westinghouse's engineers ques-

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tioned his more extreme statements.

When the Westinghouse Company was caught in a panic, and the bankers told Westinghouse to get Tesla to scale down his royalty, Tesla said: "Mr. Westinghouse, you have been my friend; you believed in me when others had no faith ..." and melodramatically tore up his contract.*

FOR SEVERAL years Tesla continued productive, inventing generators, transformers, induction-coils, and other apparatus. In 1895 his laboratory, his main asset, burned; he had characteristically neglected to insure it. He collected money to build another from susceptible financiers like J. P. Morgan and T. F. Ryan who, knowing his real achievements expected him to go on making great inventions—especially as his claims grew more grandiose every year. Actually, his inventiveness was drying up, and he got few patents after 1905. For decades he experimented with gadgets for making high-voltage sparks, but nothing useful came out of his tests. In 1900-02 he built a 145-foot wooden tower in Suffolk County, Long Island, with a copper doughnut 100 feet in diameter on top. From this tower he was going to broadcast all over the world.

But it was only expensive fooling around. Tesla had become the world's most eminent crank, an egomaniac who, when he went to the Allis-Chalmers Company to demonstrate an impractical steam-turbine he had designed, insisted that the company fire certain workmen because he did not like their looks. When, in 1912, the Nobel Prize was offered jointly to Tesla and Edison, Tesla refused it because, he said, it was wrong that he, the great scientific discoverer, should be bracketed with a mere tinkerer like Edison. He ran his affairs in a way that makes Fitch look like a prudent and thrifty businessman. When he had money he spent it on lavish entertaining. He would not collect royalties on his older inventions, saying with lordly disdain: "That is all small-time stuff. I cannot be bothered with it."

FOR DECADES before his death, Tesla lived at the New Yorker, during his last few years on a pension from the Yugoslav government. He indulged his quirks and phobias. If a fly lit on his dinner-table, the table must be cleared and the meal started over, be-

*J. J. O'Neill: *"Prodigal Genius"* (1944), p. 82.

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cause of his horror of germs. He fed pigeons, with one of whom he had a weird platonic love-affair. He practiced curious diets like milk-and-whiskey. Every birthday he held a news-conference, at which he announced a great forthcoming invention. One year it was wireless transmission of power; then interplanetary communication; then a death-ray; then a scheme for lighting the night-side of the earth by artificial aurora. Though many unscientific persons were taken in by Tesla's pretensions, nothing came of these plans.

He also presented "proof" that Einstein was wrong and declared that "atomic power is an illusion." If a classical case of the Mad Inventor is wanted, Nikola Tesla fills the bill.

SO MUCH for the mental aberrations that scientists share with the rest of mankind. How about distinctively scientific forms of madness?

One would hardly call absent-mindedness a form of insanity, but it is a mental peculiarity that does seem especially characteristic of scientists. The absent-minded professor is not merely a joke. Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics, was notoriously absent-minded.

What it means, of course, is not that the man's mind is not working, but that it is working so hard on some technical thought that the outside world has virtually ceased to exist.

During his Newark period, in the 1870's, while taking out a patent a month, Edison got married. On his return from his honeymoon with his head full of ideas, he forgot he had a wife and rushed off to his shop leaving the poor girl at the station. Another time he went to the city hall to pay his taxes on the last day allowed.

Absored in thought, when he got to the window and was asked his name, he had forfotten it. By the time he had gone through the line again it was too late. He had to go back next day and pay the tax plus a 12 1/2% penalty.

FOR OTHER examples, Charles Burgess, the electrochemist and battery-inventor, once was invited to go horseback-riding by a friend. He went upstairs to change but, thinking about a technical problem, put on his pajamas and got ready for bed. Hudson Maxim, the inventor of smokeless powder, once walked out of the rain into the lobby of the Astor House in New York holding his open umbrella still over his head until he noticed people staring. Another time he left this restaurant with

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one of its napkins still tucked into his collar.

Joseph A. Holmes, head of the U. S. Bureau of Mines in 1911, once invited a man and his wife to his house for dinner. He forgot to tell Mrs. Holmes; in fact he forgot about it himself and took a train for Richmond that night. "Mrs. Holmes, serene in the belief that the evening held a promise of restful quiet, had given the cook the night off. She had been, at the moment the doorbell rang and two strangers presented themselves, in the kitchen preparing herself a cup of tea ..."*

SCIENTISTS have been disturbed by their profession to the point of having nightmares about it. Edward Drinker Cope (1840-97), the swashbuckling American paleontologist, had this trouble. On his expeditions he would awaken his fellow-collectors by thrashing and screaming, and it would turn out he was dreaming of being chased and trampled by whatever monster they had dug up the previous day.

Speaking of dreams, the able but bull-headed German-American Assyriologist Herman Volrath Hilprecht (1859-1925) told of a curious one. Once when he had long and vainly tried to assemble a broken clay tablet, a priest of Bel appeared to him in a dream and showed him how to fit the pieces together. When he woke up he found it worked. No mystic, Hilprecht said this showed how the unconscious operated.

Despite his faults, Hilprecht was thoroughly sane, but one of his associates broke down mentally. This was John Henry Haynes (1849-1910), a teacher and archeologist who went with Hilprecht on the University of Pennsylvania's expeditions to Nippur in Babylonia, 1888-1900. Haynes had taught in Turkey and been on an earlier expedition, but he was nervous, apprehensive, and not very adaptable. He and John Punnett Peters, an Episcopal clergyman who organized and commanded the first two of the University's four expeditions, knew only the obsolete treasure-hunting methods of Schliemann and other pioneer archeologists, which consisted of digging big holes and trenches at random to find portable loot. Hilprecht on the other hand was an enthusiast for the new method of peeling the site off layer by layer, carefully recording the position of each brick and stone. Peters chose Haynes as his business-manager and Hilprecht as his scientific director.

*Frank Cameron: *"Cottrell, Samaritan of Science"* (1952), p. 170.

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THE FIRST expedition had a terrible time. The Arabs hired to dig quarreled among themselves and with the Turkish soldiers guarding the expedition. They stole everything in sight, and every so often the whole gang would drop tools, snatch up spears and muskets, dance a war-dance, and rush off shrieking into the desert to fight a tribal battle. When an Arab, trying to steal, was shot dead by a guard, the Arabs became indignant at the cruelty of the crazy infidels. One of them set fire to the reed-hut camp and burned it up in five minutes, during which much of the expedition's property was either burned or stolen in the confusion.

The second expedition, with Peters and Haynes only, was more successful. Peters overawed the Arabs by displays of fireworks.

Then Peters took another ecclesiastical post, and the trustees sent Haynes back to Babylonia. Hilprecht never got there, because he was still recovering from diseases caught on the first expedition. Haynes worked alone most of the time, though he feared and hated the Arabs he had to hire. One assistant died of disease; two others did not get there until the terrified Haynes was ready to leave anyway.

On the fourth expedition, Haynes brought his bride as well as two architects. Haynes began to break down under the strain, losing his memory and general competence. Mrs. Haynes took over more and more of the direction of the expedition and quarreled with the architects.

HILPRECHT arrived and took vigorous command, raising the roof because Haynes had been excavating by treasure-hunting methods and gravely damaging the site. The architects sided with Hilprecht. The party lived in a state of feud, not speaking to each other for days. Nevertheless, the expedition gathered a vast mass of information and thousands of tablets.

Then Peters published a book about his early expeditions. In this he narrated a couple of amusing incidents that made the pompous Hilprecht look ridiculous. In a fury, Hilprecht wrote a big semi-popular account of the work, *"Explorations in Bible Lands During the Nineteenth Century"* (1903) full of blistering condemnation of the amateurish methods of Peters and Haynes. This criticism finished off Haynes, who remained a mental and physical invalid the rest of his life. It also touched off a feud between Hilprecht and his colleagues that became

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almost as celebrated as the Cope-Marsh feud.

THEN THERE are those scientists who work themselves into a state. Many suffer from a compulsive-obsessive neurosis. Their super-ego—or whatever you call the force that drives a man to do things that do not lead to his own immediate pleasure—forces them to work long hours with fanatical intensity to the exclusion of other interests, even when they do not get much pleasure from the work.

Isaac Newton was one of these. He worked in four fields of knowledge: physics (including astrophysics and optics), mathematics, chemistry, and Biblical scholarship. In physics and mathematics his contributions were as great as any man who ever lived, but he does not seem to have enjoyed the work. In chemistry his achievements were respectable, but minor (speculum-metal, glass-making) and he disproved some of the pretensions of the alchemists. His Biblical researches—painstaking chronological studies of the reigns of the kings of Israel—were worthless. Yet he dearly loved his chemistry and his Biblical work. He did his physics and mathematics because something drove him to it; drove him so hard in fact that in middle age he had a nervous breakdown in which he accused his friends of trying to "entrap him with women."

THE STORY of a scientist working himself into a breakdown, resulting in collapse and exhaustion, is common. Louis Agassiz did it; so did James Dwight Dana the geologist, Michael Faraday the physicist, Gustav Theodor Fechner the psychologist, and George Ellery Hale the astronomer. The case-histories are so similar that one can almost stand for all. Faraday came down with loss of memory, confusion, and giddyness in 1847 and had to give up laboratory work for about a year. Fechner strained his eyes in researches on after-images of the sun and overworked as well: "He had developed, as James diagnosed the disease, a 'habit-neurosis.'... He was prostrated, and resigned, in 1839, his chair of physics. He suffered great pain and for three years cut himself off from every one... Then Fechner unexpectedly began to recover, and, since his malady was so little understood, his recovery appeared miraculous."* Hale

*E. G. Boring: *"A History of Experimental Psychology"* (1950), p. 278.

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got into a state about 1919 in which he could not discuss any astronomical subject, such as the sun, without getting so excited and overwrought that he would collapse and be unable to work for days. On other subjects he was still perfectly competent, so he gave up astrophysical research and devoted the rest of his life to the financial and administrative sides of science.

THE SYMPTOMS of these collapses sometimes sound like hypoglycaemia, a lowering of the sugar-content of the blood, which may have any of several causes such as hyperinsulinism. This brings up the "naturalists' disease": brucellosis or undulant fever, a warm-climate disease transmitted from domestic ungulates to man, especially through milk.

Historians of science have long exercised themselves with the question of what was wrong with Charles Robert Darwin. As a youth, Darwin was tall and powerful, amiable but lethargic, bored by his studies and interested in little but hiking and shooting. His friend Henslow at Cambridge thought he saw a dawning interest in natural history and put up Darwin's name for the job of naturalist on the surveying-expedition of H.M.S. *Beagle*, 1821-36.

It has been the lot of several scientists whose duties took them across the wine-dark seas to suffer from sea-sickness. Poor Darwin suffered the worst of any, being sick nearly the whole five years. Back home he lived in London, married, and moved to a country house where he spent the rest of his long life, a hypochondriac and semi-invalid. He said he "never knew one day of the health of ordinary men" and complained of headaches, indigestion, weakness, nausea, and a morbid fear of impending doom. He worked only an hour or two a day. Any more would bring on an attack, as would the prospect of a social occasion or a scientific meeting.

Yet nobody knows what was wrong with him. A functional defect in his powerful frame should have gotten worse with time, whereas if anything his health improved with age. Various explanations have been advanced, including astigmatism, a mysterious disorder from long seasickness, anxiety-neurosis, brucellosis, and plain laziness. Again the symptoms sound like hypoglycaemia—which may be brought on by brucellosis among other causes, and enough other naturalists have suffered from brucellosis to lend color to the supposition.

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NOT ALL compulsives work themselves into a breakdown. Some are too tough to damage themselves by any amount of overwork. One of these, perhaps the most egregious compulsive of all, was Henry Cavendish (1731-1810), one of the queerest characters in a profession rich in rampant individualists. This gaunt recluse, though he inherited one of the largest fortunes in England, was so shy and misanthropic that, except for meetings of the Royal Society and running a private circulating library, he avoided all human contact. He never married, ordered his meals by leaving a note on the hall table, and commanded his female servants to keep out of sight on pain of dismissal.

When a delegation came to ask a contribution to a worthy cause, he irritably offered them ten thousand pounds if they would only get out and stop bothering him. When, at a meeting of the Royal Society, he heard that a distinguished foreign scientist had come to meet and question him, he sneaked out the back door and went home. When he was dying, an old servant asked him if he wouldn't like him to keep him company; he told the man to get out and not come back until he was good and dead.

Such misanthropy is unusual in scientists. Excepting the social scientists, most scientists neither love nor hate their fellow-man to excess, but regard them in a detached way, and tolerate them so long as they do not interfere with their work.

Cavendish's compulsion was measurement. He spent all his time measuring things—sizes, densities, weights—to a greater accuracy than anybody had ever achieved. He was the first to weigh the earth and to apply measurements to electrical phenomena.

THEN THERE are the scientists and inventors who have made fools of themselves by acting irrationally, imprudently, or against the evidence.

Of course we must consider the circumstances before pronouncing a scientist a fool. Cotton Mather was a good botanist as well as a witch-hunter, but was he foolish to believe in witchcraft? All things considered, no. He believed in the Bible, and the authors of the Bible indubitably believed in witchcraft (that is, as an actual supernatural power and not as mere quackery, shamanism, and pretense, which everybody agrees has existed ever since primitive times). In adhering to belief in witchcraft, Mather was being more consistent, though not more correct, than his successors who abandoned

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witchcraft while professing to keep complete faith in the Bible. Mather did show hostile prejudice and cruel fanaticism in his dealings with the witch-suspects, but no more so than most frightened men theretofore and thereafter.

The unsocial, schizoidal personality often found in science (outside of the social sciences again) sometimes results in a man who, though perhaps brilliant in his own line, spends his whole life in hot water because he cannot understand or get on with his fellow-man. Take John Fitch, the steamboat inventor (1743-98).

FITCH IS the classical case of the poor inventor. None struggled harder and longer than he; none put up with more outrageous fortune; few failed so dismally after coming so near success. Part of his trouble was his own ignorance; part was the machinations of rivals and the failure of backers; part was the state of technics of the time.

Yet even if all these conditions had been good, I doubt if Fitch would have succeeded. The fatal flaw lay within him. He was so wrapped up in his own ideas as to be unaware of how his words and actions affected others, and admitted that he tended to treat people in a "haughty, imperious, insolent" manner. His compulsive-obsessive nature drove him to pursue his dream with fanatical persistence, but at the same time made him intransigent and scornful of compromise with rivals and associates. Brilliant, touchy, excitable, unworldly, he was doomed from the start.

The distinction between Fitch and Cavendish was that Cavendish was so rich and well-born that he could afford to be as eccentric as he liked. The same applies to Fitch's rival the Earl of Stanhope, another eccentric who made several excellent inventions. Poor Fitch had no such margin of money or status to allow self-indulgence in oddities of behavior.

Another was Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840). In 1818, Audubon was an unsuccessful frontier shopkeeper in Henderson, Kentucky. One day a strange little man, unshaven and with old clothes hanging loosely about him, called with a note of introduction from one of Audubon's friends reading: "My dear Audubon, I send you an odd fish, which may prove to be undescribed, and hope you will do so in your next letter."

THIS WAS Rafinesque, of whom Audubon later wrote under a fictitious name as an "eccentric naturalist." As Au-

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dubon was pretty eccentric himself, you can imagine Rafinesque. Born in Constantinople of a French father and a Greek mother of German family, he had led a checkered career in Europe and America as naturalist, tutor, and manager of a distillery. His urge to discover new species amounted to a mania. He did find many, as he was the first scientist to cover much of the territory over which he wandered. He and Audubon talked far into the night about natural history. Rafinesque had hardly retired when, as Audubon wrote:

> ...of a sudden I heard a great uproar in the naturalist's room. . . I saw my guest running about the room naked, holding the handle of my favorite violin, the body of which he had battered to pieces against the walls in attempting to kill the bats which entered the open window, probably attracted by the insects flying around his candle. I stood amazed, until he was fairly exhausted, when he begged me to procure one of the animals for him, as he felt convinced that they belonged to a "new species". Although I was convinced of the contrary, I took up the bow of my demolished Cremona, and administering a smart tap to each of the bats as it came up, soon got specimens enough. The war ended, I again bade him good night, but could not help observing the state of the room. It was strewed with plants, which it would seem he had arranged in groups, but which were now scattered about in confusion. "Never mind, Mr. Audubon," quoth the eccentric naturalist, "never mind, I'll soon arrange them again. I have the bats, and that is enough." *

IRKED BY the loss of his violin, Audubon plotted a fiendish revenge. He showed Rafinesque drawings of ten weird fish he said he had seen "down the river." Rafinesque ecstatically copied the data into his notebook and published descriptions of these fish under such imposing names as *Pogostoma* and *Aplocentrus*. Later biologists were puzzled not to find these fish alive anywhere, and not until long after both naturalists were dead was the hoax exposed.

Next year, Rafinesque got a professorship at young Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky. A lively and unconventional lecturer, he made some friends, some enemies. Like many learned men he had

*J. J. Audubon: *"Audubon's America"* (1940), pp. 54f.

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no small-talk and would sit silently at a party until one of his pet subjects was mentioned, after which the problem was to turn him off.

His aggressive opinionatedness and tactlessness drove him into feuds and finally cost him his job. He spent his remaining fourteen years in Philadelphia, writing hugely (he turned out about a thousand books and articles in his life), lecturing sometimes, s t a r v i n g often. Some colleagues like Torrey and Eaton stood by him; others rejected his work as "the wild effusions of a literary madman." He dabbled in poetry, invention, and banking until cancer killed him. His misfortunes have been explained thus: "he never grew accustomed to the behavior and ideas of ordinary men, and never acquired the orderly methods and mental attitudes of a trained scientist. Much of his personal suffering and of the ineffectiveness of his work can be traced to this unconquerable innocence."*

THEN HOW about the scientists whose folly is uncritical enthusiasm and who seize upon some irrational opinion with the eagerness of the snake-oil salesman's victim? There are many such cases: the Spiritualism of Wallace, Lodge, Hare, and others; Reichenbach's "odic rays"; or Zoellner's fourth-dimensionalism.

The Zoellner case started in the 1860's when the great Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz wrote on the philosophy of science. In defending an empiricist view that derived all knowledge from sense-perceptions, he advanced the speculative and fanciful idea of dwellers in two-dimensional and four-dimensional space and worked out the logical consequences of these assumptions. For instance, to dwellers on an egg-shaped surface, circles of equal radii would have different circumferences at different places.

Helmholtz was too sound to take such speculation literally, but his colleague Johann F. C. Zoellner, an astronomer at the University of Leipzig, did. Zoellner was beginning to show signs of mental breakdown. He undertook to prove the reality of the fourth dimension with the help of "Doctor" Henry Slade, an American medium who specialized in slate-writing. The astronomer persuaded four colleagues to join him: Wilhelm Wundt, Gustav Theodor Fechner, W.

*Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. "Rafinesque."

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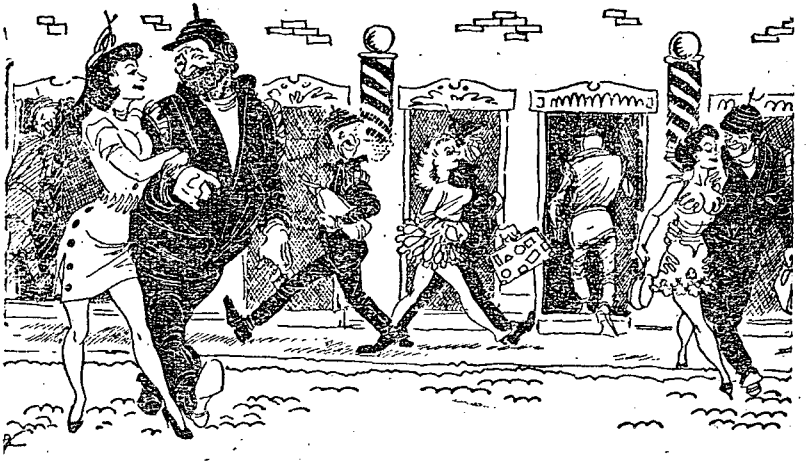

Any resemblance between this sober account of the deplorable situation at Badron City, and the kind of slam-bang western stories you've seen heretofore under the disguise of science fiction is a laughable coincidence!

SINFUL CITY

by Christopher Anvil

Illustrated by FREAS

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HUBERTUS VAN MOCK, the Earth delegate, was the last member of the tri-racial committee to arrive at Badron City. The fame of the place had spread all the way around Carlson VI to Headquarters-Earth, on the planet's opposite side, but Hubertus still wasn't prepared for the sight when he saw it.

Daurek and Fsslt, standing beside him, had seen Badron City before, and had passed the stage of amazement. Daurek, the Centaurian delegate, stood with four of his six arms crossed on his chest, with the other pair set indignantly on his hips, and with his handsome, silver-thatched head thrust forward belligerently.

Fsslt, the tall, thin, many-armed, multi-jointed delegate from the Probity Council of T'ng, stood like a teepee of writhing black sticks, his big eye glaring malevolently down the street, his whole posture suggestive of destruction and slaughter, barely restrained.

"Well," said Daurek, turning to Hubertus, there is it. Now what do you say?"

Hubertus shut his eyes for an instant, then opened them. He was staring down a long narrow street lined on each side by shops lettered *Barkery* and thick doors with plaques marked *Dentist*. In solemn procession, on either side of the street, candy-striped barber poles turned in unison as far as the eye could see.

"To read the signs," said Daurek, "there are more bak-

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ery shops, barbers, and dentists, in this one place, than we need on the whole of Carlson VI."

"I still can't believe," said Hubertus, "that they're—Well, that they're—"

DAUREK SNORTED. As they watched, drunken figures lurched in and out of the bakeries, bottles in hand. Husky rocketeers hurried into dentists offices, to emerge arm-in-arm with short-skirted women, many of whom had faces hard enough to scratch diamond. Rather dopey-looking individuals drifted in and out of barber shops, their hair just as long when they came out as when they went in.

"Well," said Hubertus. "This is quite a problem."

"You're only beginning to see it," said Daurek. "The T'ng and I have been working on it for a week-and-a-half, and I think we'd supernova the place if we thought we could get away with it. —Look There!"

Down the street, a barber-shop door flew open. A tall Centaurian ran out, flung all six arms to the skies, and leaped into the air, clicking his heels and shouting "Oloo! Oloo! Oloo-looloo! Olooloolooloolooloo—"

Several men of various races, wearing white barber coats, rushed out to hustle him back inside. Hypodermics gleamed in the hands of some of them as the tangled mass rushed across the street back into the building.

"Another case of the dancing jeebees," said Daurek angrily. "There goes another rocketeer. Three more months of this, and half the Centaurian Sector VIII Fleet will be grounded."

Fsslt, the T'ng, raised a kind of small black box on a stick, with a hole in one side, then stopped as his attention was caught by a partly-clad Earth women who raced across the street. One of Fsslt's countrymen was close behind her, with a multitude of thin black arms grasping tattered pieces of clothing.

FSSLT SPAT a little bright-red ball out of what was anthropomorphically called his "mouth." The ball shot into the black box on a stick that Fsslt was holding, and the box spat out "Miscegenation!" in a flat, grating tone of voice.

"Electrocution would be closer to it," said Daurek. "The T'ng reproduce electrically."

"Whatever it is," said Hubertus, "it's got to come to a stop. It's in places like this that the epidemics get started."

"Agreement," said Fsslt, the little red ball slamming back

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and forth to the translator. "But how?"

"How? Slap an off-limits on it. Raid the place. Close it up. Fine them. Deport them. You name it, we can do it. I'll bet there isn't a law or ordinance on the planet they haven't broken. What do you mean, 'how'?"

Daurek laughed dryly. "We'll show you. Come on." They started down the street.

"Wait a minute. Look there," said Fsslt, putting out five or six limbs to hold them back. "There's that six-armed Centaurian pick-pocket we ran into the other day."

"Sure enough," said Daurek.

Directly in front of them, a scrubby-looking Centaurian had appeared from an alleyway. Two of his hands were rubbing briskly together, and the other four were floating around aimlessly as he made believe he was stretchin~ himself. His eyes were running over their clothes greedily, plainly assessing the items of value that might be found within.

"Cross the street," growled Daurek.

Fsslt spat his ball into the translator, and the translator gave off a threatening rumble.

WHEN THEY crossed the street, the grubby Centaurian drifted along behind them, flexing his half-dozen hands. As they walked, their ears were assailed with moans, cries, low screams, and incoherent babblings from the various places of business. Fleeting whiffs of strange odors subjected Hubertus and Daurek to sudden gusts of exhileration and depression. As they passed a "dentist's office," a six-armed Centaurian woman, lavishly built according to the pattern of six-armed Centaurian women, stepped down, slid one arm around Hubertus' waist and one around Daurek's. "Muffla minnen, Moddy?" she murmured to Daurek.

Daurek's face twisted in revulsion, so she turned quickly to the stupefied Hubertus.

"Have a tooth pulled, Buddy?" she said. "The sweetest, longest, loveliest tooth-pull you ever—"

Whack!

Hubertus whirled around to see the grubby Centaurian pickpocket sink to the earth. As his hands opened up, there spilled out of them Hubertus's wallet, cigaret lighter, and wrist watch, and number of exotic items that had apparently been filched from the distracted Daurek. Fsslt was rising from over the pickpocket, the translator box gripped like

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a club in one of his appendages.

Daurek thrust the dentist's assistant, now giggling hysterically, back into her doorway. Hubertus swiftly put the valuables into his pockets. The enraged Fsslt swore furiously into the translator, from which there emerged an outrush of garbled abuse, ending up "... iseramable ously bod-gammed don-of-a-sitch, tlash bim, anyway!"

THE CENTAURIAN delegate turned back to Hubertus to get his valuables, and Fsslt shok the translator and looked at it intently.

"Say, Buddy," mumbled a thick-tongued Earth pilot weaving across the sidewalk. "You didn't do right by that little spider-girlie. Boy, they're the greatest—"

"*Spider* girlie!" snapped Daurek, pausing as he stuffed a thing like a small gold-plated hedgehog back into his pocket.

"Tooth-pull, Honey Baby?" said the dentist's assistant, emerging again from her doorway.

"Tooth-pull? Say, will I!" The pilot lunged around and started for the door. He vanished inside with three arms around him, one ruffing his hair, and another going through his left hip pocket.

"What a place!" snarled Daurek.

"Let's get going," growled Fsslt; he then held up the translator, glared at it, and raised two or three arms to point down the street.

"Why can't we go around this rathole?" demanded Hubertus. "Isn't there a less-traveled side-street, or preferably a country road we could use?"

"This is the only street in the place," said Daurek. "The town dump is spread out on both sides where you might expect side-streets to be. If you want to go through the dump and fight rats, slikes, and gang-beetles, you're welcome to it."

They moved on in silence, past a pale-faced barber with tiny pupils who mumbled, "Haircut, buddy? Give you the closest shave from here to Polaris."

"Thanks, no," snarled Hubertus, shouldering past.

As Hubertus passed, the barber took his arm. "Just a little nip will give you an idea—"

Whack!

The barber sank to the earth a hypodermic needle projecting from the half-closed fingers of the hand.

Hubertus glanced at Fsslt, whose big black eye was roving around with an ugly glint in it as he passed the dented

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translator from one appendage to another.

The two motionless bodies spread out on the sidewalk behind them seemed to have some influence on the other residents of Badron City. Patrons came to the doors of the shops to eye the trio speculatively, but no one else tried to force his wares on them.

TWO-THIRDS of the way down the street, Daurek halted by a man-hole cover. "Feel that rumble?"

"Underfoot?" said Hubertus. There was a faint, steady trembling of the pavement. "Yes, what is it?"

In answer, Daurek reached down with all six arms, and after a brief tussle got the heavy cover loose and rolled it aside. A sound like Niagara flowing through a sewer pipe came up to them. Tiny droplets of spray wet the pavement about the hole.

"So much for that," said Daurek, tossing the cover back on the hole. "Come on."

At the end of the street was a rail like that at the stern of an ocean-going ship. Hubertus blinked and started. Beyond the rail was a moderately wide river, flowing, flowing, flowing, steadily toward them, only to disappear with a deafening roar.

"Look down," yelled Daurek.

Hubertus leaned far out over the rail, and saw a honeycomb of pipes and conduits of various sizes and shapes, into which the water swirled and vanished. As he watched, water backed up out of one large pipe, as if the pipe had suddenly filled. Some ten or twelve feet away a turbulent stream of water suddenly gushed down into a large culvert.

Hubertus straightened up, frowning. He looked around. Fifty feet upstream, a line of steel posts embedded in concrete swept out in a protective arc. Between the pipes and the foot of the rail where Hubertus stood, a heavy mesh fence stretched down at an angle from the roadbed into the stream, and vanished underwater in a line of foam. He glanced around again, then climbed down onto the fence. It trembled slightly under him as he examined the pipes and the shifting flow of water.

SHORTLY before coming to Badron city, Hubertus had received a sheaf of documents on the legal aspects of the subject, and he had fully intended to study them. However, one of his minor assistants chose that exact time to elope with a pretty Centaurian

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girl, and in the three-ring hullaballoo that followed, Hubertus never did get to the papers. They now lay un-read in a briefcase in his hotel room. Hubertus shook his head and climbed back up the fence with a feeling of bafflement and frustration.

As Hubertus reached the top, some sixteen to twenty hands, nippers, and tentacle-tips seized him, and hustled him, horizontal and facedown, across the street into a big silent building, and hurled him in a heap with Daurek and Fsslt. A door clanged and they were left in the dark.

"Birthless wasterds!" cried a grating voice and Hubertus realized Fsslt still had his translator. He disentangled himself as well as he could, and got to his feet. Beside him, Daurek was saying something that sounded like "muggermuggermuggermugger *mugger*." This was exactly what the Centaurian girl's father had said about the elopement.

THEN THE door opened, and a bright light came on overhead. Daurek broke off his monologue. Hubertus saw two heavily-armed Centaurians and a tough-looking Earthman carrying an electric whip.

As these three came in, Hubertus could see Fsslt out of the corner of his eye. The T'ng was passing the translator from one limb to another, apparently to keep it out of the line of vision of the gunmen. A faint twitching in one of Fsslt's larger limbs gave a clue to what he had in mind, and made Hubertus nervous.

"In the back!" barked the Earthman, waving his whip. Behind him, a tall, crafty-looking T'ng came in, his various arms folded together in a look of smug superiority. Hubertus looked at him and instantaneously wanted to batter him against the wall. There was a moment's silence as the T'ng seemed to relish the situation. Then he raised an enamelled blue translator with gold trim. In languid tones, the translator said, "I am ready, Slits. Put your questions to the beastlings."

"All right," snapped the Earthman. "What you snooping around here for? Who you think you are, anyway? You spies or something? Give me one good reason I shouldn't put you through the chopping machine and throw you out to the slikes and gang-beetles."

Fsslt's arm gave a big twitch. Hubertus felt his stomach muscles tense.

Daurek raised three hands, palm out. "Suppose I tell you gentlemen, we are higher-ups

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from Earth, Centaurus, and T'ng? That our cops will come in here and wipe the floor up with you guys if you have the cheek to dare interfere with us in any way? How about that? What's to keep them—I mean, what's to keep *us* from shooting a fleet of torps down that puddle and really blowing this dump sky-high? How dare you detain us like this? Where's your security?"

The Earthman blinked and looked around at the T'ng. Two or three of the T'ng's arms came loose and moved around vaguely, then he raised the enameled translator.

"Obviously, they are *not* officials, or they would not state that they *are* officials. Moreover, they talk as if they might be friends of yours, Slits."

"May be," said the Earthman, trailing his whip on the ground. "But I don't trust them; they look like they got class."

"It is easy to give the exterior a thin coating of culture," said the T'ng. "If you will look at your countryman closely, Slits, I think you will see what I mean."

SLITS LOOKED hard at Hubertus. Hubertus bared his teeth slightly, evaded Slits' gaze, and let his glance dart around the room.

"Yeah," said Slits. "I see what you mean. All right, Buddy, let's hear *you* say something."

Hubertus jerked his head toward Daurek. "He can talk for me."

Slits looked back at the T'ng. "Now what?"

"Inquire the business of these gentlemen, obviously. If there's profit in it—"

Slits turned around again. "What's your racket?"

Daurek scratched his head, sides, back, and hip with five of his hands, and took Hubertus' arm with the sixth. "Listen," he said in a low voice, "I think we can do business with these boys. There's room for us. We'll just fit right in. The only thing is, suppose something happens to this river trick they got... Then what?"

Hubertus, who had only the haziest idea what was going on, grunted noncommittally.

"Okay," said Daurek, turning back to the tough-looking Earthman. "We don't tell you *nothing* till we get the word on this river trick. Suppose we come in here, sink a lot of capital in a little place, and the cops clean us out? Then what?"

Slits turned dispiritedly back to the T'ng for more instructions.

The T'ng had his arms all folded, and was holding his head tilted calculatingly. He

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appeared to have the situation reduced to the question whether to kill Hubertus and Co. first and then cut them up, or the other way around. "We have already," he said, in icy tones, "entirely as many shops as we need."

A look of decision came to Slits. He opened his mouth to bark orders.

"Aw, go on," Daurek interrupted, "there's not a pick-me-up on the place."

Slits stuck the butt of his whip in his mouth and bit on it. He turned back to the T'ng for new orders.

THE T'NG looked confused. "A pick-me-up?" he said, forgetting to talk through his intermediary. "Isn't that just a—a—"

"Sure, sure," said Daurek, looking eager and alight with enterprising genius. "See, you got all these—ha, ha—bakeries, and so on. All right, a guy goes into one of these places, and first thing you know, he's had all he can use. Right? Well, what then? Maybe he's still got part of his roll stuck in his shoe." Daurek looked outraged, and stepped forward as he slammed three fists into three open hands for emphasis. "You going to let him get away while he's still got some money?"

"Well—" said the T'ng.

"You're not going to let *money* get away from you, are you? So—" he beamed—"that's where we come in—A pick-me-up. A step-uppery."

He pointed a hand at the confused Slits, who was chewing idly on the whip handle. "Right? Am I right? You got limits, you know what I mean? You go out for a good time; after a while it isn't good any more, am I right? Okay, you come to our little pick-me-up, and we set you up for the next round. We refresh you. That's what you need around this place. *Everybody'll* make more money."

By this time, Daurek had Slits by the arm in his eagerness. Daurek paused for a moment, looking benign and fatherly. "You better take that out of your mouth," he said, gently removing the whip. "Hurt your teeth." With another hand, he was feeling Slits' arm. "Boy, you got a muscle. Any time you want to drop around to our place for a free shot—"

Slits nodded, looking vaguely agreeable. The two guards seemed ready to go to sleep on their feet from boredom. The T'ng vaguely raised an arm, as if for attention.

The whip leaped across the room, letting out long white sparks. *Whack!*

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Fsslt was gone from Hubertus' side.

HUBERTUS dropped low, and charged for the one guard still on his feet.

The guard had six arms, but Hubertus concentrated on the little finger of the hand at the end of one of those arms. There was a loud yell, and a sound like thirty pounds of scrap being dumped on the floor. Hands seemed to take hold of Hubertus from all over. He lay on the floor and bent a newly-captured wrist back sharply.

Whack!

The guard went limp.

Hubertus got up to see Fsslt returning his attention to the other T'ng. The various limbs of the two T'ngs were so hopelessly intertangled that it made Hubertus dizzy to watch it.

Daurek was using a couple of hands to flail the other guard with the electric whip, and had Slits by the throat with his remaining two pairs of hands. Hubertus picked up a gun with a heavy handle and knocked out Slits. A moment later, Fsslt rose, leaving the other T'ng on the floor. Fsslt had the little blue-enamelled translator in his hand.

The three of them left the place, Fsslt sporting the flashy translator, Daurek waving half-a-dozen of the captured guns, and Hubertus with the whip tucked under his arm, the lash trailing on the ground behind him as he walked.

THE STREET cleared magically before them, and they arrived back at their hotel without incident.

Fsslt gave the translator to a bellboy, made signs that it was to be thoroughly sterilized, then led the way to their suite. The hotel was in T'ng territory; but the suite had been fitted out to accommodate all of them, so Hubertus sank down on a big soft couch with a sigh of relief. Daurek settled back in an easy chair with three tiers of arm-rests, and began grumbling, *"Muggermuggermuggermuggermugger . . ."* Fsslt sat down on a little stool and started to spin, his arms flailing out loosely as he went around and around, faster, and faster, relaxed and more relaxed. Hubertus looked away dizzily.

They rested awhile, then had dinner in a peaceful atmosphere. Hubertus ordered thick steak and french fries; Daurek ate a meal that was a fantasy of tiny servings in innumerable dishes, finished off with a brightly-colored cake of many layers. Fsslt, on the other hand, went to work on a bowl of dull grey objects about

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the size and shape of marbles. His various limbs lined up between this bowl and a slot in his chest, and the grey marbles began to climb single file from limb to limb to limb to limb to limb out of the bowl and into the slot. It took a while before the first marble made it to the slot. Then there was a loud *crack*, then a crunching, popping, snapping sound that made Hubertus sit up straight and run the tip of his tongue over his teeth and stop eating.

Across the table Daurek had put his fork down and was waiting with the look of wincing patience that Hubertus felt forming on his own face. The splintering, grinding noise rose to a dull roar and was joined by a low vibration and a high-pitched hum. The effect was like having a tooth filled while a crew with pneumatic drills worked on the walls of the room. Hubertus felt thankful to see the bowl empty rapidly. Then Fsslt pulled over a small side-dish of bright red, green, and white marbles, and began to eat them one at a time, with relish. These seemed to have a soft core, and the noise was, compared to what had gone before, almost like silence.

At last, Hubertus and Daurek leaned back, while Fsslt finished the meal off with a little bright yellow marble that tinkled as he ate it.

"NOW," SAID Daurek, "to business."

"Right," said Hubertus, "and I may as well admit right now that I never got briefed on the legal aspects of this. One of my assistants ran off with a little Centaurian girl, and that put sand in the machinery for a week."

"Well, *mugger*," growled Daurek, "what did she see in—"

"Suppose you infants try to control yourselves," said Fsslt coolly. As Daurek and Hubertus turned to stare at him, Fsslt held up the blue-enamelled translator with gold trim and looked at it suspiciously. Then he tried again. "Before I decide on the correct approach to this problem, you gentlemen will find it advisable to keep your mouths closed."

Daurek turned a dull red.

Fsslt put the translator on the table, left the room, and came back with a duplicate of the black box on a stick he'd used earlier. He tossed the blue-enamelled translator down a disposal chute. Then he pulled out his stool. "Okay."

Daurek let out his breath with a hiss.

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"It was the translator," said Fsslt. "No offense."

"As I was saying," Hubertus put in, "I never got to find out the legalities of this mess."

DAUREK turned back. "It's all legalities. That's the trouble."

"An Earthman founded it," said Fsslt drily.

"Name of Jaxon Badron," said Daurek. "He picked the one spot on this side of the globe where Earth, T'ng, and Centaurian territory comes together."

"Oh, oh," said Hubertus, "as I remember, Centaurus has one side of the river, and Earth and T'ng have the other."

"That's right. Centaurus to the west of the Sendyou, Earth and T'ng to the east."

"But at Badron City," said Hubertus, "where's the river?"

"That's it," said Daurek. "Where is it? Jaxon Badron put it underground."

"Well—" Hubertus scowled, remembering the roar and the pipes.

"Don't forget," advised Fsslt, "Fix Creek is in there somewhere, too."

"That's right," said Daurek. "It seemed like a nice simple boundary when they made it. Centaurus west of the Sendyou, Earth and T'ng to the east. Earth north of Fix Creek, T'ng south of Fix Creek. The only trouble was, they didn't make any law against moving the river. So now, *nobody can claim jurisdiction, because nobody can locate the boundary.*"

"I don't think so," said Daurek.

"Me, either," said Fsslt. "The lawyers will split rocks down into grains of sand, count the specks, and we'll all end up paying Badron City an indemnity."

"All right, then," said Hubertus, "take the line of the old channel."

"We can't," said Daurek. "The treaty specified the *river*, not the channel."

"Well, revise the treaty."

"No thanks," said Daurek, "that means a conference."

"Well, all right," said Hubertus. "Why not? I mean, have a conference."

DAUREK groaned.

"Not me," said Fsslt. "One more conference, and I drown myself in the Sendyou River."

"I see what you mean," grumbled Hubertus. "All right, average the flow."

"How?" said Daurek.

Fsslt added, "They switch it around pipe to pipe."

Hubertus hesitated. "Maybe we could clog the pipe?"

Daurek nodded. "We've

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been working around toward that."

"Personally," said Fsslt, "I favor blasting the place clean off the planet. Float enough spun plutonium down the stream and let it pile up on that wire screen they've got in front of those pipes—"

Hastily, Daurek said, "We've been over this."

"I know," said Fsslt. "On mature consideration, I can see this would leave a hole where Badron City was, and until the river filled the hole up and flowed on, we'd have boundary mess from here to the sea."

Hubertus was watching Fsslt in fascination. Turning to Daurek, he said, "The idea has its attractions."

"It's more of this damned T'ng direct action," said Daurek. "Once the city went up in would claim it was Centaurian smoke, Centaurian reporters territory; T'ng reporters would say the sneaking Centaurians had made off with a piece of T'ng territory; *Earth* reporters—"

"Never mind," said Hubertus hastily, "I get the point."

"Personally," said Fsslt, "I resent that about 'Damned T'ng direct action'."

"Well," said Daurek, "I apologize."

"But," said the Centaurian, "on another hand, I think it's perfectly true."

FSSLT'S translator box let out a dangerous hiss.

"Men—" said Hubertus, uneasily.

"Listen," snapped Fsslt, "we've got to close this rat's nest *soon*. Last week, another, rocketeer came back with the orange mold. He infected half-a-dozen more before they got him into the chambers. Then all seven had to go. The Admiral swore he'd blow the place off the map if it happened again."

"More direct action and simple solutions," said Daurek "What do you want, a war?"

"No," said Fsslt. "I just tell you we're going to have a real incident here next time. Before you bang and hammer on us T'ng for being simple, show us what you subtle, complicated Centaurians have got done."

Daurek looked down at the floor and grumbled, "I got us out of that cell they had us in."

Fsslt hesitated, then spat the little ball into the translator. "Truth," said the translator, grumpily.

"That's right," said Hubertus. "We owe you a lot for that. And you and I owe Fsslt a lot for getting us past that pickpocket and the so-called barber."

Daurek looked up. "Yes, that's true. Well, Fsslt's simple solutions will get us in a worse

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mess on this problem, and my complicated ideas can't even get a grip on the thing. The trouble is, it's a complexity—the mixed channels—hidden, under a simplicity—the surface that hides the channels courses and amounts from us."

"Well," said Fsslt hesitatingly, "if we could somehow strip off that surface—"

"No," said Daurek, scowling, "that would be violence. Maybe if we, say, *dyed* the stream—"

"But," said Fsslt, "the stream course would still be hidden under the ground—now maybe if we put acid in to eat out the pipes—

"Only," said Daurek, "that would make trouble further down stream. Say, though, what about a radioactive solution, then fly above the city and plot the channel—"

"Pest on it," growled Fsslt, "they switch the water from channel to channel so by the time we figure it out—"

"Damn," grumbled Daurek.

HUBERTUS suddenly sat up straight. "Wait a minute. I think I've got it!"

"What!" Fsslt and Daurek looked at him pessimistically. "Remember," said Daurek, "they switch all that water around, so even if we—"

"Never mind that," said Hubertus, "you wait and see." He got up in excitement. "All I want is your agreement, and we can start right now."

"Well, you've got my agreement," said Daurek.

FSSLT AND Daurek were standing with Hubertus a week later, when the last of the big bulldozers stopped working. From the hill where they stood they had a splendid view of Badron City and its surroundings. Hubertus studied the scene for a moment, then spoke into the microphone: *"NOW."*

To the north of Badron City, a big water-gate fell into place. The river backed up momentarily as if dammed. There was the sound of a soft explosion that heaved an earth embankment, then the river flowed through into its new artificial channel, a big ditch which flowed completely around Badron City, well to the west. To the east of the river, another water gate closed and Fix Creek flowed through a new channel to rejoin the river well to the south.

Badron City was now completely in T'ng territory.

From the northwest, a black column, as thick on the road as ants, could be seen approaching the city. Watching the column through field glasses, Hubertus could make out a

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number of the T'ngs' famous Mangler tanks, each consisting of one motorized six-inch gun with a heavy sheet of metal wrapped around it. Following these came a T'ng housewrecking machine, a thirty-foot steel club mounted in the squat turret of a massive motorized platform.

Behind these came a large mass of outraged T'ng citizenry, from which were occasionally raised aloft large clubs, mallets, and mauls. Pulled along behind the crowd came a gallows on wheels, portable electric chairs, chopping machines and dessicators, each with its own generator mounted beside it ready for use.

From Badron City, meanwhile, a horde of barbers, dentists, and bakers, could be seen fanning out for the river. No one stopped to argue. In a situation like this, the T'ngs simple methods were unbeatable.

Fsslt turned to Hubertus. "The stinking pesthole is cleaned out," he said with satisfaction.

"Thank heaven," said Daurek. "Now maybe we won't have a war or an incident for another year."

Notables of various races were coming toward Hubertus in groups, all looking, after their fashions, pleased and congratulatory.

"While we stick together," said Fasslt, "what problem can't we solve?"

"But," said Daurek, "for this one, Earth deserves the credit."

Suddenly Hubertus was surrounded with happy Admirals, mayors, and directors of health,and Hubertus was shaking their hands. More hands, incidentally, then he would have cared to count.

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Made To Order

NOVEL by Frank Belknap Long

Illustrated by Murphy

Society could not let him marry, or become a father; but for men like him, there was a sort of happiness . . .

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AGNES AND Claire. I'll say it again. Agnes —Claire. How could both be so much a part of my life, and so different; and how could I have taken Agnes into my arms before I even knew her name?

Perhaps it wasn't so strange. How could I have known the name of the girl who stood beside me?

You stand before the humming computers and you fight off terror. You feel a more-than-human wisdom crushing you, denying you the right to think for yourself. You know that your future should be in your own hands, but you can't wring that much independence from the master controls.

The Big Brain can't know what a man is thinking, but the feeling is there—the guilt feeling. You want to escape, and can't. You look around you, and you see your own face mirrored back. You see on gleaming metal the haggard eyes, and tight, despairing lips of a total stranger.

The girl who stood beside me was trembling violently. She'd punched her identity number, and the Big Brain's answer had struck her like a hard-knuckled hand in the dark.

I could see the punched metaltape gleaming on her palm, four inches of tape. I could see the torment in her eyes, the film of moisture she was furiously trying to blink away. She was staring straight at me, but I knew my face meant nothing to her. It could only have seemed the cold face of a stranger, trapped like herself.

THE REALIZATION of her torment gave a sharp, heady quality to my anger. The guilt feeling dissolved and I felt only anger. She was so very beautiful that I succumbed to the universal human fantasy. I saw her as an outcast girl in a freedom ruin, and there was the tang of death in the air, the rich, heavy perfume which outcast women wore.

She was standing against a crumbling stone wall, her large dark eyes wide with desperation, her unbound hair falling to her shoulders. She was a hostage to desperation, appealing to the primitive in man in the pitiful hope of awakening love that might know reverence and respect. I had come upon her suddenly, and I was fighting for her in a canyon of crumbling steel against men lost to all honor.

Then I saw the light of the dome glowing on her hair, and the bright, dangerous vision was gone. I wanted to whisper

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to her: "A computation denying you the right to marry is a crime against beauty such as yours. Don't accept it. Insist on a more rigorous check on every phase of your ancestry." But I didn't say it. How could a man and a woman reach each other with sympathy and warmth when a terrifying weight of non-human wisdom denied them the right to courtship.

A glance is a beginning courtship, a word spoken in a certain way, the briefest of handclasps in a shadowed room. Even that was denied us; we were strangers. There could be no hands stretched forth in friendship or reassurance. If you listened carefully you could hear the humming computers. You could hear the click of the metaltapes being punched, being cut off sharply. You could hear a lifetime of misery being punched out in exactly ten seconds.

Marriage Privilege Permitted Marriage Privilege Denied

The vault was like a prison, harsh with artificial sunlight, each of the twenty computation units guarded by heavy bars. You could look up at the glittering tears of memory banks and stimulus-response circuits and tell yourself that the Big Brain was society's only bulwark against decay from within. But if the unit before which you stood flashed its cold light upon you, the dryness in your throat wouldn't be from pride.

TO THE simple fellow yonder, the humming meant that the Big Brain was taking a personal interest in every man and woman in the vault. To the junior coordinator, whose lips had gone suddenly white, it was quite otherwise. He was an educated man; he was waiting for the Giant Computor to make an impersonal analysis of data as unalterable as the stars in their courses. It was the Giant Computer in the eyes of Society, and the technicians who had designed and constructed it. But to me "Big Brain" cut closer to the truth.

Popular names have a way of doing that. Whatever the pros and cons of logic and science, a machine that can destroy your happiness takes an interest in you.

Marriage Privilege Permitted Marriage Privilege Denied

There is more to it than that, of course; but you had to have good eyesight to read the micro-lettering, which told you

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exactly why you'd made a tragic mistake in allowing yourself to be born.

Biogenetic advances in electron-microscopic Rontgen-ray analysis having made possible the exact determination of the genes of human inheritance in the human adult, the individual's blindly instinctive urge to marry and have children can now for the first time be successfully controlled. Experience has shown that it is to society's best interest to maintain at all times a perfect balance of the more desirable genetic types. It thus becomes obvious that curtailment of the marriage privilege must, of necessity, be directed solely to that end.

It was as simple as that. I looked down at my own tape, at the cruel words punched into the metal.

John Tabor...Marriage Denied

Ironically, I wasn't even an undesirable type; I was perfectly healthy mentally and physically. In a few years my type could marry again. But right at that moment there were too many of *me*.

IF I MARRIED now, I would be destroying the beautiful socio-biogenetic balance which had to be preserved—even if it meant enforced celibacy, or a freedom ruin, for a man who had thought to find his greatest happiness in marriage and a home.

The girl next to me hadn't turned. She was still staring at me, and her eyes were clear now—clear and fearless. I hadn't intended to speak to her. I had fought that impulse, knowing what it could lead to. I thought of the vigilance against unlawful love-making, save in the uncontrolled freedom of one's rooms, how every instrument of technology was arrayed against it. It could not fail to be detected and the penalty—death. Otherwise, banishment for evermore to a hunted existence in the primitive, decadent ruins of Nuork.

The desires of youth have no beginning, no end. It wasn't sympathy alone which made me ask: "How bad is it?"

"My classical Mendelian ratio is too low," she said. "Too low, that is, for anyone of the pooled offspring of a series of families where the parental mating types are identical."

She laughed a little hysteri-

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cally. "I seem to have memorized it word for word. It's funny how you'll do that when everything stops for you, and you want to die."

"If it ties in that closely with multiple-family data you can ask for another analysis," I said. "Computations based on more than fifty predicable ratios are often in error."

I showed her my tape. "This is my third computation. I received my first two years ago."

SHE SEEMED not to hear me. She was looking at me with a new interest, as if my sympathy had brought her new hope and courage. She drew nearer to me and suddenly there was a flame of yearning between us. Her femininity became so overwhelming it frightened me. I looked around the vault.

A security guard stood by the door, but he wasn't watching us. His eyes were on another girl, halfway down the vault—a wholly unattractive girl who stood with her head held high, as if defying the humming computers to deny her happiness. Spots of color burned in her cheeks, and in her eagerness to become a wife and mother she seemed suddenly almost beautiful. I looked away quickly, feeling I had no right to stare.

My temples were throbbing, but I refused to admit that I could be in danger. If a woman I did not know was weak, and wanted to touch me, I could be strong. Her hand was suddenly warm in mine. "Tell me about yourself," she whispered. Realization came with a numbing suddenness. She could have asked anything of me, and I could not have refused her.

I told her my name, my occupation. I told her I'd just come from Venus Base, and I told her why I was going back. "Hard work is the only real compensation," I said. "When you're headed for a construction job on the planets, you don't have time to think much. It's better than staying on Earth, and seeking a substitute for happiness."

I told her of the planet's savage beauty, and there was only one thing I kept back—how different I was from most of the men who sought escape on Venus Base. I didn't tell her how great and unusual were my telepathic powers. It was far too dangerous a secret to entrust to a woman. When a child has been born abnormally telepathic, he learns caution at an early age—even though he cannot hope to conceal his secret from the Big Brain.

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"THERE ARE no women on Venus?" she whispered. She was standing very close to me, and suddenly her hair brushed my cheek. I told her about the construction work.

"Men who can't marry on Earth will have their chance," I said. "Women will be sent out. There are restrictions you can't impose on pioneers and builders."

"Women will be sent out when you are dust," she whispered.

I pretended I hadn't heard her. I held on to Venus as a child will hold on its most treasured toy, pretending it has found a way to make it yield adult pleasures.

"The restrictions will be gradually relaxed," I said. "Even now it is a free and easy world. You can travel from construction camp to construction camp, whenever the urge to roam takes hold of you. To quiet that urge, women will be sent out."

"They will let you die first. The Brain has not yet made its power felt on Venus. It knows that when men have tasted freedom, society must move with caution." Her fingers tightened on my arm. "Society needs men like you for construction work, but those who come after you will be a more docile breed. Society will never reward men whom it dares not trust."

"I'll have to risk that," I said.

She gave me an odd look. "I suppose it *is* better than sitting under a psycho-helmet dreaming about a woman who exists only in your mind."

"Emotional Illusion Therapy can be a satisfying experience," I told her. "You can have beautiful experiences in dreams. Sometimes it's so real you never want to wake up."

"But when you do wake up?"

"I went to Venus Base because I preferred to stay awake," I said. "Does that answer you?"

Her eyes searched my face. "Did you ever go to a freedom ruin?"

I shook my head.

I WOULD have gone to the freedom ruins, if the stakes had been clear cut. In the ruins it was kill, or be killed. The women who went expected to be fought over, and the men—

You found a woman you could love and you courted her until tenderness and desire flamed in her eyes. Then, unless you were completely a beast, she became your woman

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for as long as you could hold her. No society can exist without its safety valves. By computation, a certain percentage of the denied would find their way to the ruins. A certain percentage would die. Whenever I thought about the ruins I could almost hear the Big Brain whispering: *"Society has taken certain regions, and about them it has erected barriers of self-loathing. Beyond the barriers there is no law but the law of the jungle. Beyond the barriers my wisdom has no meaning. But it is well that some should go; it is necessary."*

If the stakes had been clear cut—a choice between living and dying—I'd have accepted them gladly. It was kill or be killed, for in the ruins men outnumbered women, five to one.

The eyes of the girl at my side burned into mine. Large eyes she had, a deep lustrous violet which looked black until you discovered that they could glow for you alone. "Do you know why women who can never have love here go to the ruins?"

"This is why!" she said. Her arms went around my shoulder, and she crushed her lips to mine, so hard I couldn't breathe for an instant.

Then she stepped back quickly, her eyes shining. "Call it anything you wish."

"There's a name for it you don't often hear in the ruins," I said.

She came into my arms again; it was a madness we couldn't control, and there was a terrible danger in it.

WE WERE saved from disaster by the utterly unexpected.

Far down the vault a man was screaming. His fists were tightly clenched, and he was screaming out imprecations against the humming computers. There was a hopeless rage in his eyes—rage, and bitter, savage defiance. Even as he screamed, he began to slouch forward with a terrible weariness of a man trapped beyond all hope of rescue.

I had no right to interfere; it was a problem for the Security Guard. The Guard was just starting to turn, the electro-sap at his wrist glittering in the harsh light.

The thought of what might happen made me almost physically ill. I had no right to interfere, but I did. I crossed the vault in five long strides, and I grasped the screaming man by the shoulder. I swung him about, and I started slapping his face. First his right cheek, then his left. It may have been

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bad psychology, but I had to chance it. I'd seen men killed or crippled for life by electro-saps. The guards weren't deliberately brutal, but sometimes they didn't know their own strength.

Between slaps I spoke to the poor devil in a whisper, deliberately keeping my voice low, knowing that you can't reason with a sick man by shouting at him.

"C a r e f u l—the guard's watching you! Don't force him to use his sap! Do you hear? You won't walk out of here alive!"

Abruptly the poor devil stopped screaming, sagged forward, and would have collapsed if I hadn't caught him.

THE GUARD was instantly at my side. "Just what did you say to him, friend? Don't you know that helping the wrong people can get you into trouble?"

I didn't answer; I just waited, hoping he'd let my interference pass.

He glared at me, then said, "Get his arm around my shoulder. I want to find out if he can walk."

I stood watching the Guard assisting the poor devil out of the vault.

It's funny how tension will distort reality. I watched the Guard pass from the vault, then turn back to reassure the girl I'd taken so impetuously into my arms.

She was gone.

For a moment I stood staring around the vault, shaken, despairing. Then slowly balance and sanity returned to my mind. I realized with a shudder of relief by what a narrow margin I'd been saved from utter disaster. Unlike that poor devil, I could face the future with confidence. I was a potential "marriage privilege permitted" type, and I knew that hopes temporarily d a s h e d wouldn't stay buried. I knew that when I left the vault and emerged into the clear, bright sunlight it would light up the world for me.

My heart was singing when I turned, and walked out into the corridor, and descended to the street.

II

I WOULDN'T be l o n e l y any more! She'd be slender and gay, with tumbled red-gold hair; and when she came forward to greet me for the first time, her smile would warm me as I'd never been warmed before.

I'd spoken to the man, and it was all arranged; I was on my way to pick her up. My

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beetle purred as it sped swiftly down the shop level driveway, red sunlight gleaming on its fused tungsten hood. The air was crisp, cool and invigorating, and the future looked bright.

All I had to do now was conquer a tendency towards fuzzy thinking, and face up to the facts. It was as if I could hear the computers humming, giving it to me straight. All right, the computers couldn't talk. You fed them your identity data, and answers came out punched into a metaltape. But it was as if I could hear the Big Brain itself whispering to me.

"Not for you a quiet fireside, and a cloak around your shoulders when you're too old to dream, boy! You'll die on Venus Base.

"Take your happiness while you can. Make the best of it. You've got strength and you've got courage far beyond the average—so take it in your stride. This is the year 2486! There are gadgets, a million satisfying gadgets—glittering, and beautiful, and new. Gadgets to make up for everything nature, or society, or the perversity of fate denies us.

"There are compensations for every bitter frustration, every handicap of body and mind, every tragic lack of the raw materials of happiness. Wade in, and wise up. Take a substitute for what doesn't come naturally. Drive down to the shop level arcades, and buy yourself a wig with synthetic nerve roots which will grow into your scalp. Buy yourself a bone ear, a musical or art appreciation grove-in, a money-sense illusion, anything you'd care to name."

"YOU DON'T have to be reminded that there are some men who might say: 'There is no substitute for the real thing. You'll never get around it and you may as well stop lying to yourself.'

"But not you, boy! You'd never say that because you don't give up as easily as that. Naturally they've been keeping it quiet. You have to dial the right shop. You've got to speak in a persuasive whisper to the right people. You've got to mention just how many trips you've made to Venus Base.

"Buy yourself a beautiful Android. Naturally it's labelled: *For Spacemen Only!* If you've got something new and tremendous to sell you'd be crazy to offer it on the open market, wouldn't you? Mass production takes years to build up. Until the mass production stage is reached, high profits can only be made without State Bureau interference.

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"Why not sell your products directly to men whose need is so great and urgent—they'll pay specialty prices? Pay eagerly and disappear into space?

"It's the only policy that makes sense and you've no quarrel with it, have you, boy? You've spoken to the man, and you know exactly what you want, and you've the money to pay for it."

THE BIG BRAIN, of course, wouldn't speak quite so frankly. The Big Brain wouldn't conspire with an outlay firm to deceive the State Bureaus, much as it might want me to accept a substitute for the wife I couldn't have.

I was really listening to a separate rebellious part of myself arguing with my more cautious self. My reckless self was now completely in the saddle. It pleased me to listen to that inner voice hammering home the facts, garnished up a bit by the Big Brain's authority.

We'd better get it straight right at the start that artificial women are as old as the human race. There are Aurignacian Venuses from rock caverns in the Pyrenees you could date in your dreams with no effort at all. A bit on the plump side perhaps, but what of that?

What is a statue really? Hasn't a statue a definite mechanical function to perform? Isn't the statue of a beautiful woman a kind of android designed to delight the eye and the brain?

Remember, an object doesn't have to move at all to be mechanically functional. If a certain arrangement of lines and curves and dimples can evoke a biogenetic response in a man you've got a mechanical prime mover, and if that object happens to be a statue you've got an android in a strict sense. You can do without the photoelectric brain cells and the Cyberenetic memory banks.

THE PYGMALION fantasy is the key. Every man carries about with him a subconscious image of the one perfect woman. There's a biological norm, and that norm constitutes the ultimate in desirability. Every individual woman departs from the norm to a greater or a lesser degree. Nature is constantly attempting to create new species, and that tendency towards mutational variation keeps altering the norm, throwing it off center.

Features too large or too small will distort or completely shatter the norm. A woman with a too large mouth, for instance, may have other features so perfect she will still be beautiful. But her beauty won't be perfect if a single one of

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her features departs from the norm. The closer women approach the norm in all respects, the more beautiful they are.

Unfortunately a woman who seems beautiful to a Hottentot may not seem beautiful to you. You've got to go back to your ancestry for the key; you've got to find out precisely the kind of norm woman your ancestors mated with for hundreds of thousands of years.

You could marry any one of ten thousand woman picked at random, and be reasonably happy. But to be perfectly content, you have to have a perfect biogenetic mate.

Now for the first time you could get your norm girl. Your biogenetic tape recordings supplied the key. You gave the man your biogenetic tape number, all the data available to the Big Brain, and the firm did the rest.

Waiting for me was an android female with a living colloidial brain. The human brain is a colloid with a billion teeming memory cells, made up of molecular aggregates just large enough to be visible in a powerful ultra-microscope.

Just large enough to be visible. Visibility was the key, for a visible structure could be studied and duplicated. Not exactly perhaps; we'd get that in another century or so. But enough of the structure could be duplicated to yield results.

I HAD BEEN warned that there would be no emotional overtones in the woman who was waiting for me. A seven-year-old level of intelligence perhaps, no more. Curiously enough the limitation did not depress me too much. When beauty becomes overwhelming, you can think of nothing else.

The shop-level arcades were a purple and gold glimmer for ten thousand feet. At night, the lights are so dazzling that you can't see the individual beetle; but in broad daylight every window stands out, and the level becomes a tunnel of weaving lights and shadows.

It's like plunging into a revolving kaleidoscope to pluck out a rare and glittering prize. Come early, take your pick.

I knew that the shop where I'd left my order would be using some kind of false front; but I wasn't prepared for the beauty of the display which filled the window: a terraced garden with a fountain gushing silver spray, a breathtaking Watteau-gambol of fauns and satyrs in a twilight nymph pursuit.

In the window a little square sign read:

Enjoy Yourself Without Breaking The Law
Which Shall It Be?

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Ten Minutes of Emotional Illusion Therapy Or Ten Months Of Freud?

FOR AN instant, I was tempted to go inside, and forget to mention my name. I knew the routine of the illusion therapy shops backward. If the human brain is paralyzed in certain centers, and stimulated abnormally in others, you get an illusion which can only be compared to sheet lightning.

When I closed my eyes, I was inside the shop, relaxing in the scented darkness. I could feel the incredible lightness of the big impulse-transmitting helmet resting on my head. I could hear the therapist saying in a cool, soothing voice: "The women whom you are about to see are incredibly beautiful. Not one woman, but twenty. Now if you'll just relax—"

It's a swift, effective way to cure frustration. But when you wake up, the savor of living is dulled for you, just as heavy smoking often dulls the pleasures of the palate. I told myself I'd be crazy to pay that kind of penalty when I could have the real thing.

The man was expecting me. He was tall, quiet and soft-spoken; but I never really got a good look at his face.

You know how it is when you whisper over a wire. Someone has to be at the other end to take down your message. He may be young or old, an executive of the firm, or just a front man, a go-between. Instinctively, you know you're not going to like him. When you actually meet him, you see no reason for studying him closely. If he has authority, you simply accept him as a vital link in the arrangement. He becomes a person with no real identity—a figurehead, a mummer. He becomes—the man.

He looked me over carefully. It takes skilled training to judge a man's occupation at a glance. Often as not it's a hit-or-miss task—but if you're really good at it there is always a high-salaried undercover job waiting for you.

He was good at it. You spend two years at Venus Base and it shows in your eyes, the way you carry your shoulders when you walk, the very rhythms of your speech. Spend a lifetime hoeing a field in blazing sunlight, or pacing the deck of a ship at sea and you'll get deep creases in the back of your neck, crow's feet about your eyes and a leathery texture of skin such as you can't possibly get if you're a sedentary worker under glass. Two years at Venus Base can't quite do that to you, but a

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really good occupation-guesser can tag you every time.

THE MAN said: "I think you'll be satisfied, sir. But you've got to remember that a woman can be made for just one man alone, and not quite satisfy him at first glance."

I wasn't sure I liked the way he smiled when he said that —as if he knew a great deal about women himself, and was treating the matter as an amusing episode in the course of his philanderings. As if he'd discovered a girl that suited him fine, and was trying to palm off an old flame on the first gullible guy to walk into the trap. Some girl he'd decided not to like for no particular reason.

"I guess you know that caution is our stock-in-trade," he said. "We have to be careful right from the start. You've got to forgive me if I seem a little ill at ease. I'll be frank with you. I would have preferred to be a creative artist, a painter, or a musician, or something of the sort. But I guess we all get sidetracked. You're sidetracked in a bad way."

His eyes grew suddenly sympathetic and for a moment I found myself actually liking the guy.

"I've been married ten years myself," he said. "It's a headache at times, but I wouldn't want to be alone on Venus Base without a woman. No, sir; that's one thing I don't envy you lads."

HE'D HAVE gone right on talking if I hadn't reminded him that I was very eager to complete my purchase and be on my way. There was a hammering at my temples, and my heart was pounding like a bass drum.

He seemed to sense what was passing through my mind. He nudged my arm and said, quite simply: "Follow me."

I accompanied him along a narrow, dimly-lighted corridor and down a short flight of stairs to another corridor with three branching offshoots. We turned right, then left, then right again.

The room was huge and blank-walled. It didn't look like a laboratory and until the lights came on my thoughts were in a turmoil. Would she be as beautiful as I had allowed myself to believe?

I could see vague objects towering in the shadows. One caught and held my attention. It looked in the gloom like an enormous stationary globe with shining crystal tubes branching off from it.

The lights came on with a startling abruptness, flooding

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every corner of the room with a dazzling radiance.

She was lying motionless beneath the globe in a transparent tank filled with shifting lights and shadows, her long, unbound hair descending to her shoulders in a tumbled, red-gold mass that caught and held the radiance.

Her eyes were closed, her pale, beautiful face turned a little sideways.

She was as I had imagined she would be.

Her face I had always known. In youth's awakening dreams, she had smiled and beckoned to me; the magic of her features was a wondrously changing thing, like flickering of tall candles on a shrine, or the sunglow on strange, jungle-shadowed beaches in the morning of the world.

I shut my eyes, and we were walking together by the sea, her bronzed loveliness etched against the dawn glow, a miracle time itself could not tarnish.

I OPENED my eyes, but for a moment the room seemed remote, unreal. Only the woman in the tank existed for me. She wore a simple white garment, belted in at the waist. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and her skin had the ruddy glow of perfect health—the natural bronze which only a warm tropical sun can impart to the skin of northern women who have long embraced its warmth. Her cheeks were shadowed by long, dark lashes, and her mouth was a curving rosebud, and beneath the smooth-textured cloth of her belted tunic her young breasts rose firmly, twin bright mounds in a sea of billowy whiteness.

The sound was faint at first, a barely audible hum. I didn't know it was an alarm at first. It sounded for an instant like the drowsy murmur of bees in a noonday glade. But swiftly it grew in volume, turning into a steady drone, filling me with a sudden uneasiness.

The man turned abruptly, and gripped my arm. "It's a Security Police raid!" he whispered, alarm in his eyes. "We've got to get her out of here, and upstairs fast!"

I stared at him in consternation. "But why should they raid this shop?" I asked. "Do they know about her?"

"Of course not," he said. "But there's a law against concealment in an emotional therapy shop—any kind of concealment. We're not supposed to have underground rooms."

I'd forgotten about that. Emotional illusion therapy could break down all barriers and lead to actual physical or-

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gies. The police had to keep a careful check.

"We've got to get her upstairs!" the man insisted, his fingers tightening on my arm; "we've got to convince the police there's nothing wrong. She's simply your wife, understand? She came to the shop with you for therapy."

I STARED at him, aghast. "But she hasn't said a word to me! She's lying there in a deep sleep. She *is* asleep, isn't she? Speak up, man! What do you want me to do?"

"I'll wake her up," he said. "I'm going to attach an electric-stimulator to her right temple, and wake her up right now. Then you've got to help me lift her out of the tank. We haven't a moment to lose."

He did what he said he'd do. I watched him, a dull pounding at my temples, resenting the fact that she could not awaken to me alone. The presence of an outsider seemed like a desecration. He'd become an outsider the instant I'd set eyes on her, and I regretted that she could not awaken to me in a moonlit garden in the first bright flush of dawn.

We had no chance at all to be alone. The instant she opened her eyes, he removed the electric stimulator from her right temple, and turned to me in urgent appeal.

"Come on, we've got to hurry," he urged. "Help me lift her out. She isn't heavy."

I had an impulse to knock him down. If there was any lifting to be done I wanted to do it alone. Then I remembered that you can't walk into a shop and make a purchase of any kind without assistance.

In another twenty minutes the man would be an ugly, receding memory—nothing more.

Another thought struck me, incredible at such a time. I hadn't even asked her name. "I don't know her name," I protested, my voice suddenly out of control. "Tell me her name—then I'll help you."

He seemed startled and taken aback by my sudden vehemence. "You can give her any name that suits your fancy."

HE LOST his temper then, for the first time. "Do you want me to give you a catalogue of women's names? Gloria, Anne, Helen—the face that launched a thousand ships—Barbara, Janice—pick one quickly, and let's get on with this!"

His features hardened. "The police won't be interested in your romantic ideas. They'll put you through a grilling. You'll have to know something about her, not just her name alone."

The shock of the sudden raid must have thrown me off

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my rocker. I still felt that she ought to have a name.

I knew that if I named her under pressure I might regret it later. But I had no choice. *Claire,* I thought. *Claire will do for now.*

I stepped quickly to the man's side, and together we lifted Claire out of the tank, and set her on her feet.

In the tank, with her eyes closed, her beauty had seemed breathtaking. But the instant she was on her feet facing me, the instant she opened her eyes and looked straight at me I couldn't speak at all.

"Say something to her!" the man urged. "You've got to get acquainted fast. Speak up—she'll answer you!"

I cleared my throat. "I'm John, Claire," I said. "Look at me, Claire. Don't be afraid."

She had never seen me before, of course, but I knew that an artificial memory picture of my general aspect had been skillfully stippled into her mind.

Her voice was low and musical, and it matched in all respects the wondrous beauty of her features. "John," Claire said.

I KNEW THAT a bond of sympathy and understanding could only be established between us if I talked to her at first about simple things—the few simple things a man and a woman meeting under stress and, sharing certain basic memory patterns, would have in common.

"Yes, I'm John, Claire," I reiterated. "Do you like me?"

She stared at me as if puzzled. Her words came slowly. "I like you," she said.

I leaned forward, and put my arm about her shoulder. "I am taking you away with me, Claire," I told her. "You have never seen the city with your own eyes. There are memories of the city in your mind, but they are not living memories. You will like the city, Claire."

"I will like the city."

I took her hand. It was warm and soft, and the fingers closed quickly on mine.

A torturing doubt had crept into my mind. So far her words had merely parroted my own. I had dangled a promise before her, had opened a gate on shining adventure that would have delighted a child. Would not a child have asked: "Will it be fun?" Or "Have you a beetle? Will we go riding?"

The man was becoming impatient. "We've got to hurry," he warned. "If the police find this room I can't answer for the consequences."

He looked steadily at me. "You've put her at her ease; she's not as startled as I was

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afraid she might be. Be satisfied with that, can't you? Do you have to make love to her?"

His eyes flashed angrily when I didn't say a word. "We made her especially for you, and you're not satisfied," he complained. "You have to start playing all the stops immediately. You wouldn't do that with a new musical instrument. You'd have more sense."

HE HAD A point there, all right. But how wise had been my decision not to study him too closely. I knew that the memory of that moment would always hold emotional overtones of ugliness for me. It would always make the illusion a little less than perfect, a sordid reminder that I had not met her in a moonlit garden at the home of an old and trusted friend.

He had nothing further to say, and neither did I. I followed his advice, and together we walked Claire out of the vault, and along a corridor thronged with flickering shadows and up a narrow flight of stairs to the shop.

There were two police officers waiting for us in the shop, close to the big metal helmet which gave the customers the kind of illusions that could shut out the law completely. For us the policemen were real, and they were earnest.

The instant they saw us they did a slow take. One was burly, with muscular shoulders, and a florid, granite-firm face. The other was a skinny bantamweight.

The burly cop did all of the talking. The instant he saw us he asked: "You two together?"

The man answered for me. "Mr. Tabor is one of our regular customers," he said quickly. "This is his wife."

The officer planted his hands on his hips, and looked Claire up and down. "Married folk, eh? Did you put on the helmets together?"

I knew that I had to think fast. The question was a deliberately insulting one, obviously designed to trap us.

"I just dropped in to make an appointment for next week," I said. "Mrs. Tabor doesn't take emotional illusion therapy."

The officer grinned. "No repressions, eh?"

IF CLAIRE had really been my wife, the question would have infuriated me. I became angry anyway. The cop saw the flushed look come into my face, and it aroused his suspicions.

He moved closer to Claire and studied her face. "Been married long?"

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Claire shook her head. Such reticence wasn't natural in a woman, and I could see that the officer felt that he had scored a triumph.

"I shouldn't think your husband would need emotional illusion therapy if you've just been married," he said. "I'm curious to know just how long you've been married. Seven months? A year?"

Claire didn't say a word.

The officer looked at her. "It's none of my business, I suppose," he said. "But it makes a difference. If you were married recently, you shouldn't need emotional illusion therapy at all—and neither should your husband.

"It's an important thing to get straight. In fact, there are laws against illusion therapy for the newly-married. There's a waiting list, you know; and if a lot of honeymooners crowd in when there's no real reason for them to compensate for anything, the State suffers in the end."

He looked at Claire again, even more steadily. "Now suppose you answer my question. Just how long have you been married?"

Claire said: "John is my husband. I like John. John likes me."

That did it. The officer swung on me. "Can't she answer simple questions?" he demanded. "What is she—a moron?"

"Wait a minute now—" I protested.

He didn't give me a chance to calm down. He beckoned to Skin-and-Bones, and the little bantomweight grabbed my arm from behind. "We'll have to take you both in for questioning! She must have something to conceal—or she'd speak up."

I LOST MY head completely then; I saw red. I straightened my shoulders, wrenched my arm free and gave Skin-and-Bones a violent shove. Then, without turning, I grabbed Claire by the wrist, and we started for the door.

Instantly the burly cop stepped in front of us, and barred our path. "Now you're really in trouble! You've attacked an officer in the performance of his duty."

There was only one thing to do. I took a slow step backward, and sent my right fist crashing against his jaw. I put all of my strength into the blow, counting on the advantage of surprise. I followed through with a hard left to the stomach, the kind of jab that had served me well on Venus Base on a good many occasions.

He let out a yell, staggered back, and collapsed with a

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dizzy swaying of his entire bulk.

I gripped Claire's wrist again. "Trust me, and don't look back," I whispered urgently. "We've got to keep moving!"

We were out of the shop before the big cop could flatten out on the floor. We ran swiftly across the pavement outside, and climbed into my beetle.

"You made him sit down!" Claire gasped.

"For a minute," I whispered. "I took the bark out of him, but not the bite. When he gets up a general alarm will go out, and then we'll be in the deadliest kind of danger."

Swiftly the beetle picked up speed, sweeping up the driveway with a dull roar. I looked at Claire, sitting straight and still at my side. I felt a fierce surge of exaltation. I'd broken the law for a beautiful woman for the first time in my life.

We were getting acquainted fast.

PERHAPS it was the heady wine of exhilaration which made me reckless. But I said something to her that I had wanted to say in the shop, in defiance of the man's presence.

"Claire," I whispered.

She looked at me as if startled. "Claire is my name."

"Sure, I know," I said. "You just said you liked me. Could you say, 'I love you!'"

"I love you," Claire said. Her voice was strangely toneless, automatic.

"Say it again," I urged.

"I love you," Claire said.

There it was; but it just didn't mean anything to her. I could tell by the way she said it.

Would it mean anything later? Whether it would or not, right at the moment I knew I'd have to think and move fast. When a general alarm goes out every traffic tower becomes a scanning trap. With luck, you can outwit a Security Police network on the human level; the law isn't infallible, and never was. But when invisible beams fasten on you, and start working you over, the odds against you really start mounting.

Put a frog in a glass of water—any ordinary bullfrog, mottled green and brown—and it will start shedding skin cells at a prodigious rate. No two frogs are exactly alike, and a frog in a glass would have little chance of keeping its identity a secret from a determined biologist.

We were in the same kind of trap. I knew that before we could travel a mile, identity-ray projectors would scan my skin, hair and optic disks. They would scan me from head to toe, with scant regard

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for my modesty. They wouldn't miss a square inch, and the whorl-findings would be flashed to Central Identification; and at Central my name disk would slide from the big general file, and go clicking into an emergency alarm slot.

They'd have me tabbed in nothing flat.

I REACHED over, and gripped Claire's arm. "When we get out—keep close to me," I warned. "We've got to make a dash for it."

I halted the beetle in the middle of the block, flush with the curb.

The old subway entrance was fifty feet away. I knew we'd have to reach it in a quick sprint. As we turned from the car a siren started screaming, and out of the corner of my eye I could see that a police beetle was heading straight toward us from a distance of perhaps two hundred feet.

Directly ahead the level was blocked. I reached for Claire's hand and we started off.

"Don't look back!" I warned.

Surprisingly, Claire was good at running. She ran swiftly at my side, her feet clattering on the hard pavement. The siren sound rose higher, became a shrill, terrifying drone. Half way down the block three Security Police officers descended from a careening beetle, and raced toward us, letting the car plunge on under automatic controls.

It was then that Claire made her first serious mistake. My advice must have made a deep impression on her, for she kept close to me as I ran; too close. Thinking she was at least two feet from me I swerved sharply, and collided with her, hurling her violently back against a traffic guidepost.

The post was magnetically energized. It caught and held her firmly, and a chill struck at my heart. I grasped her by both shoulders and stared at her in alarm. "Hold perfectly still!" I warned. "One wrench will free you, but you've got to stand firm!"

OBVIOUSLY, there was a band of metal under her dress. It shocked me to realize that I hadn't even had time to ask the man about that. Just how much metal had been used to manufacture Claire?

When I had helped the man lift her from the tank, her body had seemed soft and yielding enough. But just how much metal had been used? A band less than six inches wide would have held her fast to a magnetized traffic post. But what if Claire was more of an

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artificial woman than I had dreamed?

It was one hell of a time to have such thoughts. Grimly I told myself that metal magnetized to only a moderate extent wouldn't hold fast if I gave it a really violent wrench.

I exerted all my strength, and Claire swung clear. As she lurched forward into my arms one of the running officers opened fire on us. The bullet went wild, splintering the traffic post at its base. I grabbed Claire's wrist and we started running again.

She was still good at it. It seemed only an instant before we reached the subway entrance and were swept into its dark, protective embrace.

As the clamor from outside fell away our feet set up a hollow echoing that resounded through the darkness until even the terrifying siren wail dwindled to a far-off, ghostly mockery of sound.

Then we stopped for breath, and Claire swayed toward me. I caught her in my arms and held her tightly, whispering words of reassurance to her until her trembling ceased.

III

CLAIRE continued to keep close to me as we moved forward through the echoing darkness, her face mirroring a strange, new wonder. The blue steel tracks seemed to fascinate her. She kept stopping to stare at them; once she bent and ran her fingers over a gleaming rail, back and forth, as if the coolness of the metal surprised and delighted her.

There was one rail I was careful not to touch, even with my feet, as I ran. It was known as the third rail, and touching it was supposed to bring bad luck; the superstition was as ancient as the tracks themselves.

How it originated nobody knew. Maybe when people rode on the trains centuries ago young daredevils descended into the tunnel and ran recklessly along the third rail until a train came roaring toward them. It would have been a game—wild, reckless and fearfully dangerous—quite as mentally intoxicating as filling the chambers of a primitive handgun with six bullets, pressing the gun to a vital center, and letting your life or death be decided by a single, quick turn of the revolving cylinder.

How many of the young daredevils had leapt aside in time? How many had died hideously beneath grinding wheels, their bodies crushed and mutilated without reason, primitive victims of the old Freudian "death-wish"?

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It's curious how the human mind will seize on strange ancient rites and customs in moments of great peril, as if there was something in human nature which made the dangers and follies of the remote past seem an audacious pathway by which modern man could escape to a more primitive level of consciousness. When men lived with their whole bodies, and not just with their minds alone, danger took on an intoxicating, heady quality which our own age has lost.

"Why do we walk here?" Claire asked.

"Don't be frightened," I said. "We'll come to an exit soon."

Her next question startled me by its childlike innocence. "Will it stay dark?"

"No," I assured her. "We'll go up out of the darkness into light."

I KEPT looking at her face. She wasn't a child in her beauty, her strange and vibrant warmth. Why did I keep forgetting that I had what few men before me had ever possessed—the rare grace and loveliness of a perfect illusion?

Her perfection was absolute. Could any man with the blood warm in his veins have asked for more? There was something eerily poetic about her speech. She spoke of darkness, light, fire, walking, running, as if each new experience was the personification of some elemental force, much as a child looking up at the new moon might croon with pleasure, and ask to be taken for a ride through the night sky in a chariot of fire.

What right had I to feel disappointed? I told myself that I ought to feel grateful and very humble in the presence of that kind of thinking, imagining.

But what I told myself, and what I wanted with every mad impulse of my heart and brain, were two different things. A man wants to be able to swing an adored woman around impulsively, and whisper: "Darling, remember that tune? Remember the last time we heard it? Remember how funny you looked with your strawberry curls whipped by the wind? Remember how rough the sea looked, with the whitecaps dancing up and down? Remember the fishermen coming in from the beach, and how their nets caught and held the sunlight?

"Remember, darling? Remember, remember? The balcony was just like this one, but you look even more beautiful by moonlight. What are we waiting for? Come on, let's dance!"

She saw it before I did, the

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light flooding down over the tracks a hundred feet ahead. She gasped with delight, and broke into a run.

I STARED at her, startled. It was her first completely impulsive act, breaking away from me like that without a word. Maybe she had a better brain than I had dreamed.

When I caught up with her, she was out of breath from running and my hope leapt high. But then she spoke, and something went dead inside of me. "I did not want the light to go away."

I looked at her. "Is that why you ran so fast—to catch the light?"

She nodded, obviously pleased by my quick understanding. A child mind, poetic and strange.

I stared up at the platform looming darkly through the shadows. Very carefully I measured the distance with my eyes. "I'm going to put my arm around your waist and lift you up," I told her. "Do you understand?"

"No," she said.

I stared at her in dismay. "Well—hold still, anyway," I pleaded.

For the first time I put both my arms around her, and held her tight. I was aware of her breathing, the rise and fall of her bosom.

A line from a half-forgotten poet flashed through my mind: *Man begins by loving love and ends by loving a woman, but a woman begins by loving a man and ends by loving love.*

I TOLD MYSELF angrily that such a thought at such a moment was absurd, and I forced myself to counter-balance it by repeating to myself another line: *Love is a conflict between reflexes and reflections.*

I could feel her trembling as I tightened my hold on her waist. "Up we go!" I whispered.

She wasn't very heavy. It's curious how, when you get started on quotations, you can't easily stop. Another line came to me, urging me to make haste. *Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff that life is made of.*

She wasn't heavy, but lifting her to the edge of the platform nearly wrenched my arms from their sockets. The platform was three feet above my head, even when I stood on tiptoe, and Claire let me do all of the hoisting.

I lifted her over the edge and waited until she started crawling away from me on her hands and knees. Then I climbed up beside her and helped her to her feet.

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We went up the crumbling stone steps into the sunlight.

For how many generations had the abandoned subway entrances loomed as symbols of escape to a freedom and security beyond Society's control? Tradition had left them standing for a purpose, surely, for each one led to the same central wasteland of crumbling stone and steel.

When you enter the ruins, with no intention of turning back, resolute of mind and will, the first half hour is the worst. You're without firm anchorage of any sort. You know that eventually you'll find a place to live, you'll make friends. But until you do your life hangs by a thread.

No man or woman can go it alone in the ruins. You've got to take root fast. You've got to send sturdy roots deep into the strange new soil before a bullet crashes into your spine, or a knife buries itself between your shoulder blades.

I TIGHTENED my hold on Claire's hand, and we moved along the ancient streets in complete silence. We walked past rubble-choked intersections which had once pulsed with light and traffic. The buildings were dark with age, their walls rusted and overgrown with climbing vines. The doors swung idly on their hinges, and there were ominous, blood-hued shadows and sagging signs everywhere.

Bakery. Tilson's Gas Station. Cut Rate Drugs.

So far not even a shadow had crossed our path.

Was the ruin deserted? I'd heard of ruins abandoned in superstitious fear, ruins where women—made desperate by loneliness—had refused to be fought over. They'd done their own choosing, picking one man and killing four, laughing as they discouraged all further pursuit.

Outcast girls were often crack marksmen. I pictured myself crushing such a woman in my arms, a man of her own choosing, crushing her and holding her while I watched the fury and contempt in her eyes turn to an unfamiliar warmth which startled her, and widened her eyes, and brought her lips tight against mine.

There were depths in human psychology I could never hope to fathom.

I saw a door standing half-open, and on impulse kicked it wide. With my arm about Claire's waist, I pushed forward into the shadows.

The music was a wild, frenzied burst of sound. It came from a towering, rainbow-colored shape of metal and glass which stood against a crum-

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bling wall spattered over with dark stains.

There were several tables standing about, and at one of them sat a girl with jet-black hair, and wide, startled eyes. She was staring straight at me in the gloom.

Quickly my eyes passed over her, lingering on the one-piece, silvery-textured suit, and the bared right leg with the small stocking knife held well in place. There was mud on her ankles, and her shoes were worn down from running on pavements of crumbling stone and gravel like a hunted creature of the night.

"Come in, and shut the door!" she pleaded.

THE DOOR seemed to come loose in my hands. It closed with a frightful rasp, and a chink of light came through from outside, spilling across the floor and pointing directly at me like an accusing finger.

I said automatically: "Were you waiting for someone?"

Her eyes bored into mine in a level, challenging stare. "For you."

I recognized her then. She had gone out of my life fast, and returned fast. Only, this time, there was no punched metaltape gleaming on her palm, no Security Guard watching us from the shadows.

Poetry again, a crazy line flashing through my mind. *Her young breasts brightening into sighs.* The fantasy I'd succumbed to in the vault had come true; I could only stare, moisten my lips, and wonder if I had gone quite mad.

I looked at Claire, standing straight and still at my side. She was staring at the outcast girl with friendly interest, as a child might stare at a performing bear in a carnival of animals.

How close can a man feel to two women at the same time? If you hold one in your arms, and she's tender and yielding, and her lips are fire, can you look over her shoulder at another woman with a childlike stare who speaks in monosyllables, and whispers: "You'll never know how much you mean to me, my darling!"

IN SOME ways Claire was closer to me than the girl at the table. I had held her in my arms too; I knew her name—and how could I fail to be stirred by her trust and utter dependency?

Don't be a fool, a voice whispered deep inside me. *You're drawn to both women. It's as natural as breathing for a man to be drawn to two women—a dozen. It can happen at any time.*

Surprisingly, Claire's hand

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had crept into mine. Her fingers tightened and relaxed, then tightened again.

I tried to keep my voice calm. "How did you know I was coming here? You couldn't have followed me when I left the vault. I had my own beetle, and I drove fast."

"And looked behind to make sure?" she inquired, mockingly.

She laughed at my sudden alarm.

The police raid *had* puzzled me. Emotional illusion therapy shops are seldom raided before noon. Treatments do not, as a rule, take place in the early hours of the morning, and what herdsman would send beaters across an entire mountainside to capture one goat?

Had she actually followed me from the brain vault to the therapy shop, and notified the police? The thought seemed incredible; I rejected it, even before she said: "When I left the vault I knew we'd meet again. Your need was as desperate as mine."

Her eyes brightened with a sudden, wild yearning, with a hint of voluptuousness startling in its candor.

"Your need was as desperate as mine, and I knew we'd meet in the ruins. I knew you'd come in search of me, with the memory of my lips burning yours. I knew it would be only a matter of hours until you found me."

SUDDENLY, she seemed to see Claire for the first time, to realize the significance of Claire. Her eyes narrowed, and her voice became less assured. "You did not come alone," she said. "Where did you find this girl? Who is she?"

"Her name is Claire," I said. "I did not meet her here, and I did not come here in search of you."

Her eyes widened in swift amazement, then narrowed again, fastening on Claire in angry disbelief. She half rose from the table, the quickness of her breathing revealing how deeply she had been hurt.

To appease her I said quickly, "We had some trouble with the police. I could have identified myself and straightened it out, but Claire needed my help desperately. They could have held her on a technical charge, just out of spite. A minor infraction, of no importance, but you know how the police can be when they're envious of another man's interest in a beautiful woman."

"You're interested in her, are you?"

"I've known Claire for a long time," I lied. "She's younger than you'd suspect—just turned eighteen. You ought to realize it's natural

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enough for a man my age to take a fatherly interest in a second cousin as young and inexperienced as Claire. There's nothing serious between us, if that's what you've been thinking."

"That's exactly what I've been thinking," the girl from the vault said.

For a moment I was afraid that her anger would continue to mount. But after what must have been for her a bad moment, she resumed her original position at the table, making no effort to conceal the shapely grace of her bared right knee.

"That was cattish of me," she said. "Why shouldn't I believe you? You are not the kind of man who would allow himself to be trapped in a lie—even to a woman so foolishly and recklessly emotional that she would hold you quite blameless."

SHE CAST down her eyes suddenly, allowing her fingers to stray for an instant to the securely-sheathed stocking knife.

"It is easy enough to say that jealousy is for children. It is easy enough to say that a man or a woman in love should be completely an adult. But we know better—you and I. You have been to Venus Base, and I have been denied a woman's right to happiness."

She raised her eyes and looked directly at Claire, her lips curving in a smile. "Hello, Claire!" she said. "I'm Agnes."

She motioned to a chair. "Sit down, Claire. You look tired."

Claire sat down quietly and folded her hands in her lap. She looked at me, as if to make sure I did not disapprove.

"Tell me about yourself, Claire," Agnes urged. "Just how did you get in trouble with the police?"

I started to intervene, but was stopped by a sudden change in Agnes' expression. Her eyes had widened in alarm; she was leaning sharply forward, gripping the table with both hands.

IV

I SWUNG about. Three men had entered the tavern and seated themselves at tables near the door. They were surly-looking ruffians, heavy of muscle and bone, and they sat watching us with a stillness that was ominous.

The one nearest to me was big—really big. I could see at a glance that he had been in a good many fights, and that each fight had left its mark on him. His nose was badly battered, crooked and flattened at

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the tip. His ears were misshapen, mere fleshy lobes flattened grotesquely, so that they spread out over his cheeks like crushed cauliflowers. His right cheek was further defaced by a livid scar, and there was something about the scar which made me see him in another situation—facing three or four men trying with insane rage to cripple him for life.

It was a mind's-eye vision, but it was so vivid I could see the flash of the knife as it grazed his cheek; I could see him backing away without a sound, a faint smile of contempt curling his lip.

He certainly wasn't a very handsome-looking baby, but all of my instincts warned me that what he lacked in looks he could make up for in other ways.

He was staring at Claire. Not at Agnes, but at Claire, with a curious intent look, his eyebrows arched as if in amazement.

His attitude did not surprise me. Girls like Claire were not often seen in the ruins. In the ruins, striking beauty really stood out. Put a flaming orchid in a rock garden overgrown with weeds, and that one solitary bloom will create a world of its own, so dazzling that the wrong kind of man will kill to possess it.

It didn't take Ugly Face long to recover from his surprise. When I saw his eyes leave Claire's face and pass down over her, I had a pretty good idea how long it would take him to whip out a knife.

WHAT I did was the logical outgrowth of what I was—a telepath, a man who could read the mind of an adversary in a moment of deadly danger.

There was one table between us. The instant he started to rise I leapt toward it, gripped it firmly and raised it high. The speed with which I moved seemed to cast a spell upon him. He froze facing me, his hand arrested half way to his hip.

Before the spell could snap I hurled the table straight at him.

This is Ugly Face, and you've hit him with a table smack on the chest! Try it sometime. Shudder to the impact of solid wood cracking against muscle and bone. It will make you want to cry out with the torturing uncertainty of it. Something will tighten inside you, you'll have a wild impulse to follow up the assault with flailing fists, a bellow of rage.

But if you're wise, you won't move in too quickly.

The table spun Ugly Face around, sent him staggering back against the wall. First

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one knee gave way, then the other. He went down in a lopsided kind of sprawl, and that was the moment I picked to hurl myself upon him.

He let out a yell, and drew a knife from his hip with a swiftness which said the play had been rehearsed and put into actual practice a thousand times, with a trip-hammer efficiency. But it couldn't have been too perfect a play, for the instant I planted a blow right under his chin his neck stretched out a foot and the knife went clattering.

To make sure he'd had enough, I knelt beside him, raised up his head, and asked him pointblank. He didn't answer me, and I saw that there was no recognition at all in his eyes. I decided that it would be safe to let him sag back, and go to sleep.

THE INSTANT I arose, the tallest of Ugly Face's two friends was right over me with a drawn gun. I'll say this for Number Two. Despite the massiveness of his shoulders, and his ill-proportioned wrestler's look he had a refined face.

Mild, almost baby-blue eyes he had, and a mouth that was smiling almost gently at me as he took careful aim.

"I saw what you did to my friend," he said. "I can't let that happen to me, can I?"

He might have added, "It's a nice evening for dying, isn't it?", but I moved quickly to forestall him. I jack-knifed upward, and caught him in the stomach with one sharply bent elbow, and the top of my skull.

He went down like a segmented plastic dummy, dropped from a cut wire in a garment display case. His knees folded, and he toppled forward and then back, as I lashed at his jaw with a sharp right, and delivered a left-handed blow to his solar plexus that almost broke my wrist.

He flattened out at my feet.

Number Three was still seated. I looked up quickly and saw that he was watching me, his expression strangely impassive. He was sturdily-built, but far less formidable-looking than Ugly Face; I wasn't too worried about what might happen if he came at me with a knife.

I need not have worried at all. He either saw the gun lying at my feet, and decided to play safe—or he just had no stomach for a stand-up, and drag-out fight. But whatever he decided or thought, his behavior was incredible. He simply rose quietly from the table, nodded at me, and walked out of the tavern without a backward glance.

I swung about to face the two women. Agnes had leapt to

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her feet, and was staring at me with shining eyes. I looked at Claire, and was amazed to discover that her eyes were more puzzled than alarmed. There was no warmth in them; if she was relieved to see the two ruffians lying limp and unmoving on the floor, she gave no sign.

I FELT suddenly closer to Agnes. She, at least, could share my alarm; I could reach her more quickly with an appeal based on simple common sense.

"We've got to find a safer place to stay," I said. "This was an ancient entertainment center. It still is—to men who think of women in only one frame of reference. You must have known that when you came here."

She nodded, her eyes searching my face. "Yes, I did. Does it disturb you so much?"

"Why do you ask me a question like that?" I flared. "If one of those brutes had started to paw you—"

A mocking look came into her eyes. "There was no danger of that. They had eyes only for Claire. I suppose I should feel insulted, but I happen to be a realist. If a man is primitive enough, a girl with Claire's kind of beauty will drag him down very quickly to the level of a savage with a bow and arrow, mounted on a wild stallion."

The mockery in her eyes grew more pronounced. "A woman must come to a place like this if she doesn't wish to be claimed too quickly. Few men would have the courage to come here alone, and for a woman there is safety in numbers. I knew you'd never find me if I hid myself away in an upstairs room, in one of the safer places."

"We've got to find a safe place," I said. "Immediately."

I turned to Claire. "When we leave here, we're going to walk very fast until we come to a place that looks safe," I said. "Do you understand?"

Agnes laughed. "You can tell, I suppose."

"It may sound crazy to you, but I can tell if a building *isn't* safe. Do you want to come with us?"

She looked at me steadily, the mockery gone from her eyes. "Just try and lose me."

Holding Claire's hand firmly, I walked to the door and kicked it open. It rasped on rusty hinges; for an instant, I feared that it might collapse. But then, slowly, it swung shut behind us.

I WENT out into the street again, with Agnes on my right, and Claire on my left, and no man ever had two more

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physically disturbing companions.

Of one thing I was convinced. Agnes couldn't know how I felt about Claire. Physically, Claire was the more perfect of the two; but there was that strange child-look in her eyes, the complete lack of adult understanding which chilled and disturbed me every time I glanced at her.

Agnes, at least, would have understood my desperation. She would have understood why I had turned to an android for warmth and sympathy—if I had chosen to tell her.

Did she suspect the truth already? I tried to read her expression for the answer as we moved along, hugging the dark, ancient buildings. But she hardly glanced at Claire, and her mind told me nothing. That, too, puzzled me. I had never before met a woman whose mind I could not penetrate at all.

Had she told me the truth about herself? Had she really come to the ruins in search of me? Was I that important to her?

In spite of Claire, in spite of myself, Agnes' intoxicating nearness overcame me for an instant, as it had in the vault. I had an impulse to stop, take her violently into my arms again, and tell her how glad I was that I had found her.

The building was gray and towering, with at least twenty vacantly staring windows and a great door. The feeling of security as we came abreast of it was strong in me, overpowering. I knew that it would be a safe sanctuary.

The power was so strong in me that I knew instantly that it was a building of numerous empty rooms. I knew that the rooms were huge, and littered with rubbish.

I HAD NEVER been to the ruins before, but I knew that the building would remain safe for as long as our luck held. In the ruins, as elsewhere, men and women preferred a few, well-beaten trails. Nine-tenths of the buildings remained unoccupied simply because they were too bleak and forbidding to appeal to the human herd-instinct for proximity in danger.

I turned, and spoke to Agnes. "We'll never find a safer building than this. We were lucky to have found it so soon."

I tightened my hold on Claire's hand, and we passed into a dark interior; we climbed a flight of narrow stairs to a double row of rooms which ran along both

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sides of a dismal, refuse-littered corridor.

With the two women at my side I went into one of the rooms and shut the door.

It was huge and completely unfurnished, with cracked walls and a high, sagging ceiling festooned with cobwebs. Through the two dust-smudged windows we could see a patch of sunset sky.

There was an empty crate standing in one corner, still bearing a faded label: *California Figs.*

Claire sat down on it and looked at me. "Is this our new home?"

It was the most intelligent question she had ever asked.

I took her hand and pressed it gently. "Yes, Claire."

"She's taking too much for granted," Agnes said. "But we should be here long enough to get acquainted and reach a real understanding. There are a good many things I'd like to ask Claire."

She turned to me with the mocking look in her eyes again. "You won't mind, will you, if I share this room with Claire? You can sleep in one of the rooms across the corridor."

THE REQUEST took me by complete surprise. It was a direct frontal attack which I hadn't anticipated—more against Claire than against myself.

I was tempted to put up a furious argument, then thought better of it.

Sleep across the corridor! In the ruins, that sort of thing was ridiculous on the face of it. If a woman couldn't trust a man that far, under circumstances so desperate, her presence in the ruins at all was a mockery and a sham.

But what could I say? How could I tell her that Claire needed looking after? Could I say; I don't want you to give Claire any ideas she can't assimilate without advice from me! I don't want you to confuse and frighten Claire with jealous-woman talk. She's just a sweet, innocent child, Claire is, and if you're going to start being cattish, you may inflict a grievous mental wound on her."

How could I tell Agnes that? If I encouraged her to start thinking of Claire as a rival, how could I know where it would end? How much would she find out about Claire if I left them alone together? Could she be trusted to look after Claire? The thought that the night might end in a violent quarrel, with Claire distraught and abandoned, was appalling to me.

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But I decided that I'd be risking too much to make an issue of it then and there.

Could she be trusted not to harm Claire in any way? I decided to take the risk. I'd go across the corridor and leave the door of my room ajar. I was a light sleeper, and if anyone came into the building during the night I'd surely know, and wake up in time.

It was better than risking a jealousy flareup immediately. I needed sleep if only as a safety precaution, to keep my nerves alert.

I PRESSED Claire's hand again, looking defiantly at Agnes.

"I'll see you in the morning, Claire," I promised. "I'll be very near you. Do you understand? Agnes will see that no harm comes to you."

I whispered it, so that Agnes wouldn't hear. Then I turned back to Agnes. "There are a good many things I'd like to discuss with you," I said. "But they can wait until morning."

She smiled, and put both her hands on my shoulder. Before I could stop her she kissed me, so hard her teeth bruised my lips.

She stood back abruptly, triumphant mockery in her eyes. "Good night, John," she whispered.

Claire was staring at us both, her face strangely flushed. For the first time a curious, pained look had come into her eyes.

I went up to her again, and patted her shoulder.

"Don't be disturbed, Claire. That was just Agnes' way of saying 'Good night!'"

I turned then, and walked out of the room, Agnes' lips still burning mine. She had deliberately hurt Claire, derided her, and I hated myself for allowing it to pass.

The room across the corridor was as big, empty and dismal as the room I had left. It contained a broken-down chair, a small table, and a chest of drawers dark with mildew. The windows were shut tight; and the ventilation was so bad that it hardly seemed a fit habitation for the rats which I could hear scurrying through the walls.

I tried to open one of the windows, and gave it up as a bad job. I was too tired to care. I lay down on the floor, and almost immediately fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER V

HOW LONG I slept I had no way of knowing. A vision of Venus

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Base was before me. I had my arm about the slim waist of a girl, and she was pressing close to me, and I could hear her excited breathing.

"Look down there, John," she whispered. "Kiss me first—then look."

A vision of Venus Base, and a woman's lips on mine. "Look down there, John. The men have courage, I'll grant you that; and the women are very beautiful. But they are traitors to society, and must be punished."

I saw her arm go out, white and slim. She was pointing downward, but I had eyes only for the whiteness of her flesh. I wanted to tell her how beautiful she was, and I was angry because she kept insisting that I concern myself with other matters.

"John, look down," she pleaded. "There are at least five thousand conspirators. Each must be identified and brought to justice. Tell me. Do you recognize any of the men below? Any of the women?"

I lowered my eyes at last to her bidding. Eight or ten couples were threading a narrow pass at the base of a cliff. The men wore Venus Base uniforms; the women were slender and very beautiful, with whitely-gleaming shoulders and lustrous dark hair whipped by the wind.

They were heading for a rock cavern on the far side of the lake, and one man and a girl had run on ahead and were almost at the entrance.

CLOSE TO my ear a soft voice was whispering: "They are defying society, John, setting up a new society of their own where men will be free to choose their own mates in completely primitive fashion.

"Surely there is no greater crime against future generations!" The voice grew tender and cajoling. "We must fight them, John—you and I together. It was arranged that we should meet in the Computation Vault, and you have been watched ever since.

"Listen carefully, John: You were denied the right to marry so that you might become desperate enough to help Society fight this conspiracy. The raid on the illusion therapy shop was arranged so that you would bring Claire here and I could talk to you as I am doing now.

"There is a thought bond between us, John. It is a gentle thing and not compulsive. But you must hear me out, and I have come to you between sleeping and waking, brought your mind close to mine so that there will be no barriers of mistrust between us.

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I groaned and turned on my side, fighting the voice as a beguiling false thing that made no sense. But it did not pause. "You are under the hypnosis of love, John. Your need for me will make you forget Claire. When I kissed you just now I knew, I could tell.

"You will be permitted to marry, but I will be the woman you select. We will go to Venus Base together and fight this conspiracy. We will fight it with the aid of your extra-sensory faculties. Society needs telepaths desperately."

I could feel her hands on my face, and the yielding pressure of her body against mine became startlingly real again.

"John," came in an insistent whisper. "John, listen to me. *Do you really think that Claire is an android?*"

THERE WAS a sudden stillness between, as if the words themselves had a fateful quality and she dared not go on too quickly.

I tried to rise, to free myself from her clinging embrace, but somehow I couldn't.

"Oh, it is all so clever, John, so carefully planned. The conspirators select reckless young spacemen, cut off from life and fulfillment by what they shrewdly and falsely call the tyranny of the Giant Computer. They appeal to them through the android shop scheme. Don't you see, John? The rebel women pretend to be androids.

"They *pretend* to be androids, John. The biogenetic norm data of each pilot is carefully examined in advance, and women who conform to the data of individual pilots are sold to that pilot in the shop. The women have to keep up a skillful pretense of having child minds.

"Until they are in space, John, and the pretense can be thrown aside. Then the pilot is told. Since the woman conforms in all respects to what he has always sought in a woman, he is not likely to turn back. If he is human, he is not likely to regret having thrown in his lot with her. If a woman is beautiful enough there is no folly a man will not commit for her sake."

HER WORDS seemed to fade, and the scene at the base of the cliff dissolved. I was inside a cave, vast shadowy and filled with smoke. Human figures moved waveringly through the gloom. I saw a man with his head bandaged, a woman supporting him. There were crimson stains on the bandage, and his hair was a solid mass of clotted blood.

Some of the men were seat-

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ed; others stood straight and resolute in shafts of reddening sunlight. But each was accompanied by a woman, and each had the look of a seasoned fighter struggling against desperate odds to preserve his independence and self-respect.

"Society is keeping the struggle secret, John. It has just begun, but it is spreading fast. So far, we have contained the rebels, have driven them from the central camps to solitary outposts. But reinforcements keep pouring in. The android shop scheme is working dangerously well.

"A hundred spacemen arrive daily, and the women inspire them in the struggle, stand by their sides through bloodshed and despair. Eventually, we will have a formidable army to repel."

I awoke completely then. The cave vanished, and was replaced by the firm contours of reality. At first I saw only the dim oval of Agnes' face, a white and moving blur. Early morning sunlight was streaming into the room through the dust-smudged windowpanes, but it took me an instant to realize that she was kneeling by my side and bending close above me.

Her face grew clear suddenly. "You must listen to me, John," she pleaded; "you must believe me. I, too, have unusual extra-sensory faculties. When I shut my eyes, scenes not present to the senses present themselves to me with a startling clearness. I can see scenes on Venus Base now, just as you have seen them. Our thoughts, our inmost thoughts, have been joined by that bright inner vision, by the clairvoyance which is our strength.

"I will be your woman, John Tabor—and together we will fight this conspiracy and destroy it. We will share other visions on Venus, and every move that the conspirators make will be known to us. We'll inform Society of their every maneuver, and we will not rest until they have been brought to justice."

I STRUGGLED to rise, but she clung to me with a desperate urgency. "You are really awake, John. Did you think that you were dreaming?"

She seemed to sense my confusion, the tormenting questions that had come unbidden into my mind. "Really awake," she insisted. "Do you need proof? Shall I give you proof?"

Before I could reply she put her arms around me and her face against my neck. She kissed me, hard.

"Get up, Agnes," a cold voice said.

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The sound of Claire's dress was no more than a rustle, but I knew she was standing very close to us, that I had only to look up quickly to catch her eye.

Agnes stiffened in my arms, but I did not look up until Claire spoke again. "I told you to get up, Agnes; I'll not warn you again."

I had been right about Claire's nearness. She was standing almost directly over us, and her eyes locked with mine the instant I pushed Agnes away from me and rose to my knees. Claire had reached down, and drawn the stocking knife from Agnes' ankle; it glittered in her hand.

There are revelations so staggering that your mind goes off on a tangent. There is a moment of shock, of stunned disbelief, when you just can't get a firm grip on reality.

She was a changed Claire. Her eyes were shining and determined—clear and intelligent. "You are awake, John," Claire said. "She has opened your eyes more widely than you think. She is a very clever woman. Society trusts her, and is unwilling to believe that—with her great beauty and clever tongue—she will fail in her mission."

I GOT TO my feet, untangling Agnes' arms as I rose, pushing her almost roughly aside.

I went up to Claire. "You can't be—"

"I am," Claire said.

"A real woman."

"Look at me, John. Can you doubt it?"

"The most beautiful woman I ever held in my arms," I said. "And real!"

"Yes, John."

"I was in love with you from the first instant I saw you," I said. "Did you know that."

"I was sure of it, John. They studied your biogenetic norm data very carefully. I was the only woman they could find who is just right for you. It works both ways, John. You are just right for me."

Agnes cried: "That's a lie!"

"I think not," Claire said. "He was fascinated by you but he loves me. He loves me enough to fight for a new life of freedom and independence on Venus."

Her eyes narrowed, and she added with a candor that startled me. "Elementary sexuality can be a powerful driving force in all men—and in most women. But it doesn't become really glorious until something more imperishable enters into it. The undying love of one man for one woman—his love for her as a *person*."

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AGNES' EYES narrowed and she advanced on Claire with a cold fury in her stare. "Neither of you will live to join the conspirators," she warned. "In a few minutes you will be prisoners. You will be bound and thrown into prison. Your trial and punishment will be swift, I promise you."

I knew instantly that she could make good her threat. As an agent of society, she would not have made a single warning move against us without complete assurance. I was sure that somewhere on her person a tiny signaling device had either started to operate or would do so within a matter of seconds.

I could have found and destroyed it quickly enough by disrobing her. But I knew that if she struggled furiously precious time would be lost, our peril dangerously increased.

I stared at her for an instant in stunned incredulity. She was superb and resourceful, even in her desperation; Claire seemed to have sensed that resourcefulness instinctively, and was girding herself for a physical struggle that could have resulted in disaster for us both.

I leapt forward and seized Agnes about the waist. I clamped my hand over her mouth and shouted to Claire. "Get out! I'll join you down below. Hurry, darling—there's no time to be lost."

Agnes fought like a wildcat, bit, clawed and scratched. I saw Claire turn and run through the door, and I heard her footsteps descending the stairs to the street.

"You'll never get away!" Agnes' voice was choked with a despairing hatred.

"We can try," I said, almost whispering it. I tightened my grip on her waist; then with a violent wrench I freed my left arm, and sent her spinning back against the wall.

I SWUNG about and headed for the door. I heard her cry out, but I did not turn. I leapt out into the corridor, and slammed the door shut behind me. There was a rusty key in the lock.

I locked the door from the outside, and headed straight down the stairs to the street. Claire was waiting for me at the foot of the stairs, standing white and motionless with one hand pressed to her throat.

"Come on," I urged; "we've got to keep moving. They'll be after us any minute now."

We joined hands and ran together out into the street. We kept close to the buildings as we ran, our shadows lengthening grotesquely before us on the deserted pavement. We skirted walls crumbling and

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time-eroded, ducked in and out of refuse-littered alleyways and ran for a short distance in the open, the early-morning sunlight beating unmercifully down upon us.

We were in the open when we heard the first chill far-off drone of the sirens.

I tightened my hold on Claire's hand and whispered urgently: "We won't have time to reach a subway entrance. We'll be hemmed in from all sides. We've got to hide out while the search is on."

"Where?" Claire breathed.

AHEAD OF us was a towering structure of crumbling gray-yellow stone. I gestured toward it and we headed for the darkly yawning entrance.

We passed together in a vast, dimly-illuminated hall. On all sides of us towered incredible instruments of science crumbling into rust. We fled straight down the hall and climbed up behind a gigantic, dynamo-shaped object that vibrated hollowly as we jarred it with our bodies.

Suddenly out of the darkness a voice droned: "This is Occupational Advisory Unit 34 GH. Pick your pattern for work and living. We want you to relax fully and completely while you observe the future, as we have planned it for you. You must have mechanical aptitude of a high order or you would not have come to this Unit.

"Take your time in choosing a profession. Wander about the hall at leisure and observe the many fascinating three-dimensional cinemascopic recordings. Study steel-welding, tool-making, metal-craft designing in all their intricate ramifications. It is *your* future you are planning here. Remember—*your* future.

"The choice you make now will influence your entire future. Remember. If you make a wise choice now half of the battle will be won."

I tightened my hold on Claire's hand. "This was an ancient occupational advisory unit building," I whispered. "What you just heard was the last gasp of an expiring free society. That metal tape recording pretends to offer a choice of occupation to the poor dupes who found their way here. But even then there was an ominous undertone: *observe the future as we have planned it for you.*"

"I know," Claire whispered. "In daring to plan our own future we may well have chosen a design for dying. But the choice had to be made; I am glad we had the courage to dare greatly."

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I HAD LEARNED the trick, years ago, of keeping a watertight compartment of my mind alert to danger. In one little portion of my mind a whisper in the dark, an approaching faint footstep, or dark undercurrents of hostile thoughts beating in upon me, could put me instantly on the defensive.

I suddenly knew that we were not alone in the building. I gripped Claire's wrist and drew her back into the shadows. Then I leaned cautiously forward and stared down.

There was a flickering on the stone floor far below, a faint shifting of light and shadow between the projection instruments and the cinemascopic recording screens. I realized abruptly that someone was climbing up toward us. When I strained my ears I could hear the "someone's" faint breathing.

I should have taken the initiative then and there. I should have leapt out, carried the battle to the unseen climber. I could have quickly discovered him, and his position directly beneath me would have placed him at a disadvantage. But I waited too long, and the ugly bulk of him came suddenly into view and before I could leap to my feet he covered the distance between us in a powerful but well-timed rush.

I only just ducked in time as he swung at me, both of his fists flailing. He was a security guard, and heavy; at his wrist was an electro-sap that could have cracked my skull like a mace described a flashing arc with his lunge, and I could hear the deadly swish of it.

He went spinning past me, shifting his weight as he went to preserve his balance. He almost thudded into the wall behind me, so great and furious had been his initial onslaught. But when he pivoted about on his heels and came swinging back toward me I was ready for him.

I HIT HIM in the stomach with a slashing right uppercut, and brought my left fist flush with his jaw with all the violence I could muster. He groaned and reeled back, and I kicked at his Achilles' tendron with the tip of my boot. The kick seemed to hurt him more than the blows; he let out a yell, ducked low, and weaved back toward me.

For a moment we traded blows, fierce and heavy; and I had to keep jabbing at him with both my fists to keep him from opening a twelve-inch gash in my chest with the electro-sap.

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I floored him with one very heavy blow delivered with desperate calculation.

I'd been so busy taking care of him that it wasn't until he lay sprawled out at my feet with a little ribbon of crimson trickling from his mouth that I realized that another struggle was going on in the shadows.

I turned just in time to see Claire standing with a knife in her clasp in complete isolation from Agnes. If I'd turned a moment sooner, I might have seen Agnes emerge into view between the projection instruments, and rush straight at Claire as the guard had rushed at me. I might have seen Claire draw the knife in self-defense.

But at least I had turned in time to witness the crucial stage of the struggle, and for that I was grateful.

Agnes' eyes were narrowed and she was advancing on Claire with a cold fury in her stare. "Give me that knife!" she warned. "Give it to me, or I'll take it from you!"

"Just try!" Claire said.

Agnes grabbed Claire's wrist and swung her about. Before I could get between them they started struggling.

WHAT HAPPENED then was like a scene in a dream, fantastic, wildly terrible. Agnes backed Claire against the wall and twisted her wrist cruelly. Claire resisted and fought back, but Agnes got the knife.

She let Claire break free, and then started for her. She went for Claire with the knife upraised, a killing rage in her eyes.

She went for Claire fast—too fast. Her foot slipped, and she went down face forwards; and as she fell the knife twisted in her clasp.

A look of almost childlike astonishment came into her eyes.

For one awful moment she writhed about on the floor, her fingers still clasping the knife. Then a convulsive shudder shook her. Her face twisted in agony, and a dull glaze overspread her pupils. Slowly, horribly, her eyes lidded themselves and her breathing became less harsh, finally subsiding entirely. She lay still.

If you've ever seen it happen, you'll want to forget it as quickly as possible. You won't want to be tortured by it as I was, even though for one merciful instant my mind became a recording instrument solely, a gray film which registered only that quick and involuntary act of self-destruction. I felt no horror, no shock.

I was standing motionless, staring at Claire, when four

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men and four women emerged from the shadows. The men wore Venus Base uniforms; the women were all very beautiful, with skins like rose petals and large dark eyes that searched my face in eager curiosity.

A TALL, red-haired girl with sympathetic eyes went up to the limp form on the floor, knelt and made a hasty examination. After a moment she raised her eyes, and spoke to Claire. "Does he know?"

Claire shook her head.

"You'd better tell him," the girl advised.

Claire looked at me, her eyes compassionate. "Agnes was an android, John," she said. "Agnes was the most successful of a hundred android robots made and trained by Society in strict secrecy to spy on our activities."

The red-haired girl said, "Usually our chosen mates are not told the full truth until they are safely on Venus. But when you brought Claire here, you made a dangerous situation more complicated. Our task now is to get you both to the spaceport as quickly as possible."

She smiled, "You're as good as there already, for you'll be guarded every foot of the way by members of our organization."

I looked at Claire.

She looked at me.

I thought of Venus Base, and I thought of Claire lying in my arms, her face hidden.

Just how lucky can a man be?"

★

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MORE MAD MEN OF SCIENCE

(*continued from page* 51)

Scheibner, and Wilhelm Weber. Wunt and Fechner (the one who strained his eyes looking at the sun) were among the leading psychologists of Germany and hence of the world. Fechner was co-author of the celebrated Weber-Fechner law of sensations. (This was another Weber, however.) Wilhelm Weber was seventy-four and feeble, Fechner nearly blind from cataract, and even Scheibner so myopic that he distrusted his own eyesight. None knew anything about conjuring.

AT THE FIRST seance, in 1877, Slade tied knots in a cord, both end of which were, according to Zoellner, secured all the time. He apparently recovered coins from cardboard boxes without opening them. The crucial experiment was to have been the linking together of two solid wooden rings, which, thought Zoellner, would prove the power of mediums to interpenetrate matter by rotating it through the fourth dimension. All Slade did was to string the rings on the leg of a table. Other proposed tests, such as reversing the twist of a snail-shell, Slade evaded or declined. Wundt, the most competent observer, was pretty sure of fraud; excitable old Weber thought there was something para-normal here; the other two were noncommittal.

Still, Zoellner thought he had his proof and wrote it up as *"Transcendental Physics."* Then his mental disorder became so acute that he had to be locked up for his remaining years. It seems to have been a combination of paranoia and senility—or, shall we say, a paranoid tendency which senility allowed increasing control over his actions. He became an increasingly wishful thinker, "more and more given to fixing his attention on a few ideas, and incapable of seeing what was against them. Towards the last he was passionate when criticized."*

**The Seybert Commission on Spiritualism"* (1887), p. 109.

[*turn to page* 119]

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Sometimes the premise behind a story isn't stated, but is just implied. Here we have the initial assumption that perhaps some unborn children are capable of thinking, and receiving impression.

THE MILE

by John Tara

THE MILE was about a hundred feet long, thirty high, and another thirty or so to the left. He rode it like a Roman emperor, reclining, his head on a soft pillow. It was the emptiest part of the whole thing, for, with the exception of one basic question, he had seen through it all, now. There were no more surprises left, and he had just about made up his mind.

It was all a fake, a furious fake. The damn thing wasn't worth the effort...any effort except the last, and that could easily be a crashing bore.

Noises pressed in on him; some he couldn't ignore. There was a persistant buzz, off to one side.

It was impossible not to listen, really. It came in crescendo.

"You're *sure,* Jake? You're *sure?"*

"How can I be sure. How can anybody be sure of anything? It's a gamble, ain't it? Ain't all life a gamble?"

"But Jake, can we afford the risk?"

"Leave it to me, little girl (he sensed a broad, toothy, genial smile) have I failed to bring home the bacon yet?"

"Bacon! Jakey you're a scream!"

A dry, methodical whisper cut in, and droned. An old man with the beard of the learned. Something about Karma, the

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First Three Books of Thoth, a side trip to a town not far from Peoria to look for wax-winged beetles, ten million years gone; excavations in the Libyan desert.

Libya? Ten civilizations had perished there, leaving only plastercasts of footprints in the sands of time. He tried to think of what had gone into ten civilizations: fuss, bother, feeding, bowing, scraping, commotion, drawing of wood and hewing of water.

COME TO think of it, it all boiled down to the hewing of water. You got that much of a grip on reality and your fingers went through it as though it wasn't there at all. Theoretically it wasn't; and that, too, was a joke, and a furious one. The stuff around you looked hard and felt hard, but you could subdivide it down to a terrible tickle of electricity. And what was that? Nothing. There were books on the subject, dead-center and both flanks. Millions read them. Had anybody drawn the obvious conclusions?

He knew of one group who had. And not one of them had ever seen a printed page. Maybe.

He wondered what the Greeks had used for toilet paper.

The carrier stopped, swayed, ran a little, bucked, just like a coy colt. Doors opened and shut. *Click. Wumble. Click. Drop.*

Dead?

So that was humor. A waste of time.

Up they went again. It was a matter of curiosity why people took their hats off in elevators. There were five people in this one, and none of them talked. But he knew what they were thinking. Peas in a pod. And someone or thing would open and cook them, ultimately.

Some, of course, were never peas. Marble memories for them.

For Wug-Wug the Hunter who invented the first bow.

For Gug, son of Wug-Wug, who died by it.

For Sargon, with the press-agent *par excellence*.

For Alexander (who had walked a million miles on a carpet of faces to gain the same pleasure any man can get by drawing one card to a full house).

For Ozymandias J. Kilroy, unknown hero of a thousand campaigns.

But here and there, only a twig or a blessing stuck in the perishing sands for the half of a generation, to honor the real creators of the world, after God. *Sic transit gloria...*

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IT DIDN'T make sense, or as much sense as expanding space pushing into places where space had never been.

He was wheeled out of the elevator, and there was the thunder of a jet plane going by. It sounded like a big marble, a child's marble rolling across a ceiling. When you hear a noise like a marble rolling across a ceiling, stow any corybantic invocations to the god of mere speed. *Duck, bury yourself in a lead coffin.* The latest style, again. They buried Washington in a lead coffin, and Henry the 8th, and possibly Richelieu, but not Dickens. *Bury your dead safely.* Defy worms and radiation.

A visitor walked by another one and said: "Where's the coke machine?"

"Downstairs."

"They oughta keep one on every floor."

"Yeah, old-fashioned slaughter-house."

A baby cried.

He had never heard a baby crying before. Now, why...?

Yes, why? It was doubly promised in the Beatitudes: *"The Meek shall inherit the Earth."*

But the meek, of course, could not keep it. Q.E.D.

He waited, and thought. In the Beginning was the Word. Nonsense. In the Beginning was the Hole. It either contracted or expanded, according to which astrophysicist you prayed to. In physical appearance that was All Creation, with a stamped brass trade mark on it, reading: *Manufactured by Rufus T. Almighty.* The stacked decks laid out on the company's shelves, everywhere, were not mentioned in the advertising copy.

He had only a little time left, now, and there was still that one problem to solve. In the Beginning, he began again, there was the End. Ends are the means? The Beginning was Mean. Therefore...

THERE WAS a sort of jolt. One line out of twenty billion popped into his mind. *"Will ye no' come home again?"* Perhaps the mystery lay in poetry. Men died for nothing, but many men lived by some mysterious, dark lilting of sounds. But where was Home?

If he could have laughed, he would have laughed. "I will laugh my bitter laugh," said Gogol, and then he wrote *"Dead Souls"*. It was very difficult for him to move.

"The hell with it," a doctor said, referring to a half-poised can of anaesthesia. "This is easy as *deep-dish* apple pie."

There was a sudden, red-stained flash of light, and a

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ripping sound, and a smell. Then a forceps came at him, bright, blinding, with a blue coating of metal, gaping like a hungry jaw, forcing open doors any fool knew well enough should stay closed forever. He'd be damned if he would. They were all damned anyway. The Stoics had it right.

He made a sudden, hot effort.

The little engine rocked to a stop. The little engine *wouldn't.*

Consciousness flickered out, neither pleasantly nor with any note of Revelation to solve the ultimate problem.

He was born suddenly and dead and beautiful, in the last full flush of health, a broth of a boy, and growing colder.

The worried obstetrician violated the Third Commandment, under his breath, and was not too far wrong.

★

READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS by L. Sprague de Camp

THE BIG NEWS this time about non-fiction books of interest to science-fiction readers and writers is a volume by Willy Ley and Wernher von Braun: *The Exploration of Mars*, N Y: Viking, 1956, x + 176 pp., $4.95. Sixteen paintings in color and five in black and white by Chesley Bonestell. Bibliography; no index.

This is a companion to *The Conquest of Space*, by Ley and Bonestell, which came out in 1949 at the astonishing price of $3.95 and became a best seller. The present volume is in the same format (8″x11″) with a similar set of Bonestell's magnificent pictures. If the price is not quite so low, remember that costs have gone up. All space-buffs will have to have it.

The organization is as follows: There are eight chapters. The first four, by Ley, deal with the history or areography (the science of Mars) from Chaldean astrologers who identified the red planet with blood and fire—and hence with war—down to modern arguments and speculations. Ley tells of Asaph Hall's discovery of the moons of Mars; of Percival Lowell's love-affair with the planet and its *canali;* and of the dis-

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putes over the meaning of this network of lines. One theory, which I had the fun of calling to Willy's attention, is that of Elihu Thomson, the inventor of arc-welding; this is that they are the migration-routes of animals. Addendum (p. 8): there is now some question as to whether Lippershey should be credited with the invention of the telescope, because of evidence that it already existed in Italy.

The last four chapters, by von Braun, deal with an imaginary first trip to Mars. Von Braun has worked out every detail of the expedition, with weights, speeds, and other magnitudes rattled off like figures from a computer.

The contrast between the styles of the authors is marked. Ley is a story-teller, a prose-poet who applies his rambling elegance and schmalzy charm to science. He is a competent scientist too, but narration is his real forte. Von Braun, on the other hand, is all engineer, he's inclined to shower his reader unmercifully with dryly technical data.

One of the book's best features is an exhaustive bibliography on Mars. It includes practically everything that has been written except the John Carter stories.

ISAAC ASIMOV: *Inside the Atom,* NY: Abelard-Schuman, Inc., 1956, 176 pp., $2.75. Index.

This is our Isaac's latest scientific popularization, the third if I am right. These books fall in the class called "semi-juvenile." In other words, it is aimed at the intelligent-adolescent market.

However, if you are a science-fiction reader of any age, who for years has been hearing about protons, mesons, and the like—but lacking a BS has never clearly understood them—this book would be a good way to go learning. After all, the intelligent-adolescent market is about the same as the mass-adult market. Writing about science for this market means writing the same things you would write for scientific students, but expressing everything more clearly and simply. There is some over-simplification, of course; but with non-scientists, the choice is between that and drowning the reader in the first few pages with strange technicalities. If the reader wants to go on from this level to more technically exact knowledge, there are plenty of books in professorese gobbledygook awaiting him. But for the first step, see Asimov.

Topics include the discovery of the atom and the electron; the nucleus; isotopes; radioactivity; transmutation;

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synthetic elements; atomic energy; and reactors. It's all good.

NOW FOR popularization in another direction, archeology, let us look at a volume by Leonard Cottrell: *The Mountains of Pharaoh*, NY: Rinehart & Co., 1956, xvii + 285 pp., $5.00, No index.

This is a popular book on the story of the exploration of the pyramids. The title refers to the name given these monuments by the Arabs. The author, a British archeologist, tells in a lively and readable style of the visits of Herodotos and other Classical travelers to the Pyramids; of the treasure-hunting operations of the Arabs; and of the rape of the pyramids by the Europeans Belozoni and Vyse, who blasted their way in with gunpowder. Then he tells of the work of modern archeologists, especially the lifelong researches of W. M. Flinders Petrie. A chapter is given to the Scottish astronomer and crank, Charles Piazzi Smyth, the St. Paul of the pyramidological cult. Smyth's animus was partly a fanatical Christian Fundamentalist hatred of the ancient Egyptian religion and its artistic embodiments.

There is another chapter on the late discoveries by Goneim and al-Malakh. These are, respectively, an unfinished pyramid completely buried in sand, and Khufu's solar boat. In the notorious feud that has riven official Egyptian archeology, Cottrell would seem to be a partisan of Goneim against al-Malakh. It is on the whole a good book, though I should have preferred the original forms of the Egyptian kings' names instead of their Latinized-Greek corruptions (e.g. Mycerinus for Menkaura).

EDWIN H. COLBERT: *Evolution of the Vertebrates*, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955, xiii + 479 pp., $8.95. Index.

When I wrote *Science-Fiction Handbook*, I included a bibliography with lists of books of use to science-fiction writers: reference-works on the sciences, myths and legends, and so on. If this book had been in print then, I should certainly have included it. Colbert, the Curator of Fossil Reptiles and Amphibians at the American Museum of Natural History, goes his unhurried way through all the chordate orders, showing who evolved from whom. The restoration-drawings by Lois Darling form one of the book's most attractive features. Things I never knew till now; the aard-vaark has at last been classified. It is a slightly modified condylarth, specialized for ant-eating. The Con-

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dylarthra were a group of primitive plancental mammals that flourished in the lower Eocene, practically at the beginning of the Age of Mammals. Though they were built on the lines of cats or civets, their teeth show them to have been plant-eaters. In fact they were close to the common ancestors of the carnivores and the plant-eating hoofed animals, and the aardvaark has come down from them with but little change.

The book looks expensive but is not overpriced for what you get. It is a much better buy than one by Andre Senet: *Man in Search of his Ancestors (The Romance of Paleontology)*, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1956, xii + 274 pp., $5.50. Translated from the French by Malcolm Barnes. Index.

This will hurt me worse than Monsieur Senet. As an old dinosaurbuff I hate to discourage any popularization of paleontology. As a mild Franophile, it grieves me to jump on the much-maligned French. And I do not like to pick on an author trying to do the same kind of popularization of science that I do. Moreover there is room for a book on palentology, for adults, but more popular and anecdotal than Colbert's. And this book is written in a lively agreeable style.

But I can't recommend it. It has an intolerably high proportion of mistakes; not just doubtful statements, but outright blunders. Here are examples: that Haeckel was blind (page 40), that the name *Australopithecus* is from two Greek roots (55), that hyenas normally kill their prey (91), that elephants have horns, and all ruminants save themselves from attack by flight (104), that all anthropoid apes brachiate (107), that *Stegosaurus* rolled himself up in a ball when attacked (154), that *Ceratosaurus* was a Cretaceous dinosaur and all sauropods became extinct at the end of the Jurassic (156), that sauropods (like *Brontosaurus)* could not walk on dry land (167), that *Phenacodus* is the direct ancestor of the horse (202), that the giant camels of the late North American Cenozoic are direct ancestors of the modern camel (207), that ground-sloths were toothless (209). I also doubt whether the captain of the trawler that caught the first coelacanth was a "native," that an allosaur could easily have killed a brontosaur, or that geosaurs crawled out of the water.

Some errors seem due to the translator, or the American editors, rather than the author. Thus two captions of plates have errors not contained in or contradicted by the text: that facing p. 181, which makes a tyrannosaur fifty feet *high* (instead of

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long) and that facing p. 212, which makes the American mastodon "millions" of years old, when the species first appeared only about one million years ago.

The translation is less than inspired. The translator uses "antiquity" for "antique;" "lemurian" for "lemur;" and "ape" for "monkey"—which makes nonsense of whole sections if you don't realize the mistake. Some French idioms are translated literally, which makes the book sound like the speech of French characters in the stories of Thorne Smith. The book does not demonstrate any scientific knowledge whatever on Mr. Barnes' part.

The book is set forth in a peculiar order. It begins with the discovery of prehistoric man in Europe in the nineteenth century. Then it tells of the recent catching of the coelacanth fishes in the Indian Ocean and skips back to the emergence of the amphibians in the Devonian Period. Then the author goes through the Mesozoic and Cenozoic Eras more or less chronologically and finally takes up the theory of evolution and leaps back to the ultimate origin of life two billion years ago. The author defends this procedure in an epilogue, but he does not convince me.

There are entertaining anecdotes about European (mostly French) paleontologists. The illustrations are good, though most are redrawings from the books of Colbert, Scott Osborn, and other American paleontologists, used without awknowledgement. Too bad; with a little extra effort and care it could have been a good book.

MILTON V. KLINE *et al.: A Scientific Report on "The Search for Bridey Murphy,"* NY: Julian Press, 1956, xxxi + 224 pp. Appendices; no index.

This belongs in the "it's about time" class. As most of you know, Morey Bernstein, a young Colorado businessman, began experiments in amateur hypnotism with the wife of an acquaintance, Virginia Tighe (called "Ruth Simmons" in the book). By urging her to "regress" back beyond her own birth, and by feeding her leading questions, he got her to say she was a nineteenth-century Irishwoman named Bridget ("Bridey") Murphy and to tell her "former" life. The result was a best-selling book by Mr. Bernstein, a national reincarnation-fad, a spate of articles in magazines and newspapers about the case (including a studiously noncommittal one by Dr. J. B. Rhine) and a couple of suicides by people in a hurry to get to their next incarnations.

In the present book, six psychologists and psychiatrists take Bridey and Bern-

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stein apart. In a long introduction, Dr. Rosen gives the background of hypnotism, time-distortion under hypnosis, regression, and reincarnationism. That the hypnotist and the subject, unconsciously but systematically, may reinforce a delusion shared between them, he points out, is a well-known psychological phenomenon called a *folie a deux*, which has nothing necessarily to do with sex.

Then Doctors Raginsky, Marcuse, Bowers, Shapiro, and Kline discuss, respectively, "Medical Hypnosis," "Problems of Reincarnations," "The Relationship Between the Hypnotist and his Patient," "Hypnosis, Miraculous Healing, and Ostensibly Supernatural Phenomena," and "The Meaning of Hypnotic Behavior." Raginsky psychoanalyzes Bernstein on the basis of what Bernstein tells about himself, with amusing results. He shows up Bernstein's ignorance of the progress of psychology in the last fifty years. He also points out Bernstein's unscientific attitudes: his unreasoning unbelief in the face of each new concept—whether hypnosis, reincarnation, or the late Edgar Cayce's clairvoyant diagnoses, followed by sudden and equally irrational conversion—and his constant childish amazement at his own powers.

Other points brought out are: A hypnotic subject tries to please his hypnotist: so if the hypnotist tells him to be an ancient Roman, he tries his damndest to do so even if he knows no Latin but *"e pluribus unum"* and *"tempus fugit."*

Again: cryptomnesia is the normal human faculty of having buried in one's unconscious a mass of sense-impressions that have been forgotten on the conscious level, but which can be dredged up by hypnosis or psychoanalysis. An example is a subject who wrote out a curse in the long dead Oscan language, of which he knew nothing when awake. It turned out he had once glanced at a copy of an Oscan grammar in a college library and photographed that sentence on his memory. Bernstien would no doubt have made this subject out to be a reincarnate from early Roman Italy.

Again: Multiple personality is an old and well-known disorder, studied by many leading psychologists. It is the basis of much Spiritualistic mediumship. The fact that one of the personalities claims to be a nineteenth-century Irishwoman proves no more than if it claimed, as many do, to be Napoleon or Christ. To encourage the subject in this aberration, as Bernstein had done, is a dangerously irresponsible as to give a strong laxative to somebody who may have appendicitis.

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Anybody who is curious about the Tighe-Bernstein case, or even more if they have been seduced into reading *Bridey Murphy*, had better read the present book as an antidote. The writing could be improved. Of all professional jargons, that of psychology is one of the least readable, but this is not a serious handicap if you're interested. The real crusher of the anti-Bridey evidence came to light after this book had gone to press. This is the discovery by a reporter for the Chicago *American* of a real Irish Bridey Murphy (Mrs. Anthony Corkell), who lived across the street from Mrs. Tighe during the latter's childhood in Chicago.

MORE MAD MEN OF SCIENCE

(*continued from page* 109)

THERE MAY have been a hereditary factor here, as Zoellner's brothers and sisters had similar disturbances. Later the Seybert Commission of the University of Pennsylvania exposed Slade's slate-writing tricks as ordinary sleight-of-hand, and Slade confessed his impostures.

There are many cases where scientists have done foolish things (as when Thorstein Veblen deliberately put his worst foot forward with his associates and played cruel practical jokes on people) or adopted opinions on personal, social, economic, political, artistic, and other subjects that seem mad to those who do not share them.

But there is nothing either distinctively scientific or distinctively abnormal about such behavior. There are no simple scientific principles by which one can solve a personal, political, social, religious, or economic problem, and everybody makes up their minds on such questions all the time on the basis of information that, by scientific standards, is absurdly inadequate and inaccurate. But what are men to do, when a d e q u a t e and exact knowledge simply does not exist? It does not exist because the subjects are too complex to be handled with the sureness of the physical sciences by any means now available. And outside of science, or even outside of their own particular branch of science, scientists do not show themselves endowed with any special wisdom far beyond that of common men.

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DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

(*continued from page* 21)

Knight himself puts it succinctly in chapter three, when he states, "The critical method is to take things apart. The critic uses the same sharp-edged tools on all stories, but good stories resist; the bad ones come to pieces."

And what is accomplished in this process is not only a ticketing of the bad stories, but a study of what constitutes faulty writing. It isn't of any consequence whether Damon Knight, or anyone else employing skilled judgment, rates a story good or bad or in between—it is the reasons he gives for his judgment—his exploration into the anatomy of worth and worthlessness in literature. Relatively few bad stories are intentionally so; in some cases, an author can learn his errors, and correct them, from the analysis of a "destructive" critic: in any case, other authors may learn something valuable. And, most important of all, the readers' standards of judgment may be raised thereby.

Criticism is a kind of surgery, and no given surgeon is right all the time, nor are his methods right for every possible case. The truth is that there have, at times, been critics who were blind in places, or envious, frustrated, etc. You don't have to have read any criticism at all to know this; critics are human beings—therefore individuals among them share human defects. But the failings of the practitioner do not necessarily derive from the practice itself.

Skilled judgment, then, may falter or fail at times—but on the whole, it leaves its subject healthier than before.

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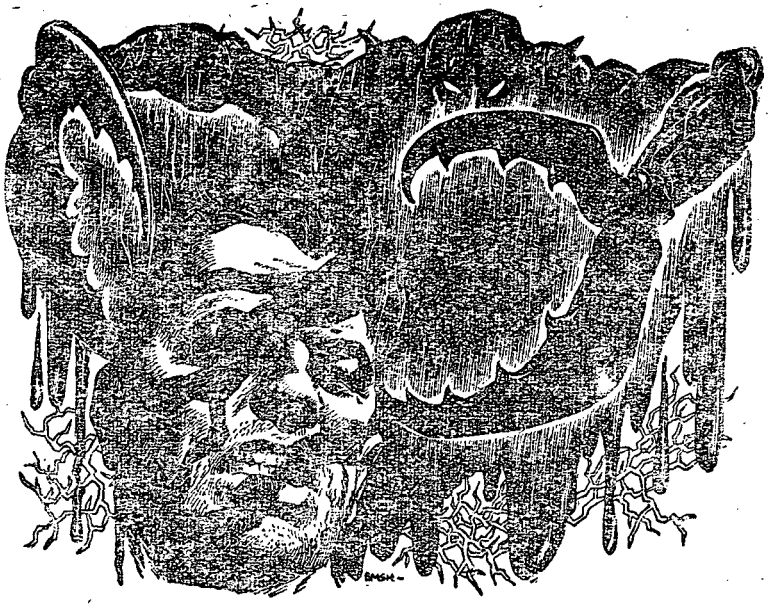

Nightmare Call

An Off-Trail Story

by Carol Emshwiller

(author of "Bingo and Bongo")

There's pain, fear, anxiety about Asdsa, beloved, and impatience to be on the way. A claw is hurt and cilia are gone. The ship is caught, stuck fast, imbedded.

Suppress it, the pain, imbeddedness, even Asdsa, beloved. Concentrate. There is a creature out there not too far. It comes nearer and it is big-and brained. It could do it, free the ship.

Suppress, concentrate and call.

HE HELD the gun lightly and walked with a brisk, angry purpose. He wasn't going any-

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where except away, away from the cabin, away from the river, away from the trees, away from... thought.

He stepped quietly on the peat-like ground of the forest and suddenly came to a small clearing. There, a few yards ahead, was a doe. She turned big eyes to stare at him, eyes that were calm with forest calmness, yet alert with a trust-in-nothing look. He stared back, seeing the bare patch on her neck where the skin showed through, and even the lump, like a cist, on one cheek.

Her eyes were brown like Mona's.

He raised the gun in a swift arc, aimed for a moment between those wide-set, brown eyes, but he hesitated and the doe ran. He saw the white tailed rump disappear behind the tree trunks and he shot two savage shots at a birch tree.

"Come back," he whispered. "Mona, come back."

Suppress, concentrate and call.

"Help!"

FOR ONLY an instant the cry was in his mind. Then a grey curtain came down shutting it out, forgetting it, as if the mind refused to believe in such a thing as a call inside it but from the outside. But the call was there, and the mind retreated farther...

"Help!"

It receives and yet can't. Its mind folds in grey and in a dream. Is it no use?

"Help! Help!"

Is it no use then? And Asdsa, beloved, are we lost to each other? Will I ever come to you?

"Please help!"

...retreated f a r t h e r into grey and dream.

He was in a tropical swamp with mud—thick, oily mud—up over his knees and he was struggling to go forward. He could only go a few inches at each step, even pulling on vines and tangled roots. That was bad enough, but there was a nightmare creature sitting on his shoulder, a mud-covered thing that whispered obscenities in his ear and told him he'd never get out. It pushed on his head and pulled at his neck with its slimy, saliva covered hands; it wanted him to sink altogether into the mud and not come up ever again. Then it got him around the neck, shutting off his wind. He clawed at it, but it was slippery and held fast; he couldn't breathe. He would go down. He tried to call out for help but his voice wasn't even a whisper... "Help! Help!"

"Help!"

HE WOKE from the dream gasping and fell forward,

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leaning his shoulder against a tree. The forest was the same. Something scampered on a branch above him. A crow flew by, cawing; the mossy ground beneath him was damp, but firm.

Trembling, he lit a cigaret. Words like nervous breakdown, schizophrenia, insanity, came to him. Words he had used often enough, but never really understood the meaning in terms of actual sickness and torment. They were only words now, revealing nothing.

He waited for the trembling and dizziness to stop.

Time heals everything, that's what they said. Things had been bad. (Bad enough to make his mind split in two? Bad enough for one part to go off into nightmare and the other into this dizzy reality?) Still, he was counting on time; he had only to be strong now and not think—especially not think. He would do that later, plumb the darkness of his mind when it was not so terrifyingly empty.

He got up, took up the gun, and thought momentarily of Mona. He had gone, yes, but she had driven him away, and he wasn't coming back.

"Next time I see that doe," he muttered, "I won't miss."

NIGHTS were the worst. Sleep was hard coming, even after these days of unaccustomed exercise. The darkness around him opened the eyes of his mind and, though he tried not to, sometimes he thought the things that were not to be thought of any more.

Mona and he had come here together once, when the marriage was new. Some of the best times were at twilight. The canoe was watertight then, and they drifted down the river almost every evening forgetting about supper until afterwards. This was the time when animals came out to wash and drink and swim. They watched muskrats mating as they swam and heard the slap of beavers' tails.

And the nights. . . each one brought something new between them.

It was just as well the canoe leaked now.

A half-sleep came at last, a sleep with muttering and turning over. The pillow was lumpy and smelled of mould; the bed was too flat and board-hard. But at last after the half sleep came the full sleep for he had walked all day.

The creature's mind has relaxed into a soft blackness, vulnerable, open. This is another time to try.

"Help!"

It was the swamp again, but worse this time. The thing on his back was bigger; its weight

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sank him up to his waist. Its hands were clawed now, and blood came where ever it touched. He struggled forward and it pulled back.

Through the dream is the only way, but can it work with a mind like this, so dangerous the creature can drown in its own greyness; and then there will be nothing left and no hope, neither for it nor for Asdsa, beloved.

Yet it's the only one here that can. Enter once and see.

THERE was something new, an island of dryness, safety, there in front of him. Only a few yards to go. And on it, was it Mona? She was white and changed. Was it her arm that ended in a large lobster claw, or was there a shadowy lobster shape behind her waving a bent antenna. Yes, hideous but not slimy with mud.

There's brotherhood and love even between us. Open your mind. Let me come in. Don't be afraid to lose a little of yourself. You do not need it all. I, too, lose some. Don't be afraid to hear me, for I need help, too.

Was it Mona or the lobster shape that talked like that? Anyway, he wasn't making any headway at all. He was struggling with everything he had, but he was still too far away. He was tiring, too, and the monster knew it. It leaned from one side to the other; it jumped and pulled at him. He was going down. The sharp claws dug into his shoulder and raked his jaw. He screamed to the lobster thing and to Mona. "Help! Help!"

"Help!"

Was he really screaming, or was it someone else?

The sky was just beginning to grey. He got up shakily. He was dressed except for pants and shoes. He pulled them on and then went to the table to pump and light the tiny, one burner stove. He needed a cup of coffee. He would be all right after that. Lord, what a dream!

He ate nothing; there was a greater need in him. The need to hunt and stalk and most of all to shoot a big animal, a doe with brown eyes.

HE TOOK up his gun, his cartridge belt and jacket. He stopped at the door, thinking he ought to take a sandwich; but then he turned and went on out into the cold morning without bothering. Eating was a thing people sat down to three times a day; they started with tomato juice and ended with apple pie. The same old things, over and over again; it was a senseless habit.

He took the same way as the day before. The sun came

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up in orange and red and then rose higher, fading the colors until nothing was left but itself. It got hotter. He no longer felt the feverish excitement of the morning. Now there was a sick determination that squeezed his mouth tight and made the muscles bunch in his arms and legs.

He found her, the same one, eating the leaves of a young tree by the side of a tiny stream. He raised the gun slowly and aimed deliberately. The sights danced over her brown-grey body. He braced against a tree, silently cursing the trembling that had come to him. He aimed for the head and pulled the trigger.

"Help! Help!"

Vaguely he heard a shot and it seemed a doe cried out with the voice of a woman; and then there was the hot mud again, and it was worse, much worse.

MONA WAS there and the lobster thing, the hideous, beautiful lobster thing, but he would never be able to reach them. The demon on his shoulders was so heavy it was all he could do just to hold it up and to hold his head out of the mud that was close about his chest.

"Why do you hate yourself so?"

Was it the lobster speaking? (But I don't hate myself.)

"We do not do so. Rather do we do or undo the thing that will take the hate away."

The words seemed to make the monster on his shoulders furious. It screamed and jumped and tore at him. Now he would surely sink.

"Fight, fight. You must not lose."

And he fought. The sweeping claws raked him. Sometimes he took great mouthfuls of mud or water, but he fought. He fought until the monster was torn from his shoulder, until they were face to face and he was breathing its foul breath.

"Look at its face. Look. And it wants you dead."

It was covered with mud. How could he see the face, only that it was ugly. The whites of the eyes showed, and the cleaner streaks on its chin where it drooled, but how could he see? And yet he had to.

HE SWUNG his elbow across the evil face and half the cheek and forehead were cleaned. He froze then, and it froze too; he stared at the grimacing, evil, proud face. And he screamed because it was a face that denied tenderness and love and all softness.

Then, before his eyes it shrank and melted until there

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was nothing left but the mud.

It was himself he had seen, as if in a warped mirror, himself that he hated and fought. *"Help!"*

Something called him.

He woke to the holding of a gun and a dead doe before him. The empty blackness of his mind was not empty after all and never had been. It was full of soft whiteness, open, vulnerable, but loving.

He knelt beside the doe and cried for it, and for Mona, and for himself. And while he cried he knew that when the time for crying was over he would go and help the one who had called him. It was a small one trapped in a small thing and it would be simple to help it with a pulley and a rope. And then he would go back to his home and to Mona.

He had gone with bitter pride, wanting to hurt her and to hurt himself; but he would come back full of new things, to Mona, beloved.

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DOWN TO EARTH

THIS DEPARTMENT is for you, our readers, and is a vehicle for issue as space allows, and it makes no difference whether they airing your opinions. We shall publish as many letters in each are complimentary, or whether the editor is lambasted for what you think was an error of judgement in selecting stories. If you want to argue with an author, or with other letter-writers, here is an open forum for you.

While the editor may comment upon a given opinion, and may express one or two of his own at times, this is your department, and you have the last word. And whether your letter is published or not, rest assured that your opinions are read carefully and taken into consideration. All suggestions for improvement are welcome, and we will follow them wherever feasible.

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

The occasion for this—the first letter to a science fiction magazine since my first year's acquaintance with the genre—is my complete amazement at issue number 31 of *Future*. By amazement, perhaps I should qualify the word with "pleased", because I read the entire issue at one sitting something which I have not done in five years. I found the issue strong throughout, stimulating, and unmarred by any of the ludicrous editorial prejudices that seem currently to be plaguing your competitors.

I think there is something truly noteworthy about this

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issue, of course, which is what prompts the letter: with the exception of Simak and de Camp (who did an article, so doesn't figure in this) each of your authors typify the new, young, vital crop of science fiction writers. Ron Smith is a fan with a deep well of talent; Silverberg and Scortia both have demonstrated they have the spark, and—for *my* money—Carol Emshwiller is one of the most valuable discoveries in the field in the last few years. Her style is crisp as iceberg lettuce, colorful as Matisse's *Burial Of Pierrot*, original as initial sin, and pleasant as a 500-page volume of Anita Ekberg photos! Why she hasn't been more roundly recognized is a puzzlement that escapes comprehension.

And it is this youth, I think, that has come to be associated with your magazines. Youthfulness in approach and direction...the youth of the inexplicable "sense of wonder" so many gabble about. I think that sense is in each of these stories I first read when I came into the field. The sense of wonder is not in concept so much as the writer's feel for his work. The younger crop have it in profusion, and they show it off to fine design in this issue.

The Simak, though slow in spots, and banal in others, was on the whole a worthwhile exercise in extrapolation. Though not quite the "nova" you tag it, I think the story well deserved to be published...and thank you sir for doing same. The Scortia piece leaves me convinced that the author will be producing some of the most penetrating stuff the s-f reader has seen in a good long while, with a style that is identifiably Scortiatic. Smith's seemed to thud at its punch, but that is probably my fault, and none of his own; the reader accustomed to a snapper somehow irrationally feels cheated if the story merely has a sound, logical point to make, instead of a more flamboyant and less significant rabbit-from-a-hat. Silverberg's Vilar is a man in whom many of us will find easy identification. *That* kind of longing and frustration is a subtle thing, not often found in the magazines these days, so aptly put. However, I get the impression that it was too easy for Silverberg to write that story. I think a little gut-wrenching might have made it more depth-filled—if that makes sense, and I suppose it does only to me.

I can't rave enough about the Emshwiller story. More! More! More!

The cover was, as usual, magnificent. With the simplicity of sincerity, Carol's

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husband seems to have outstripped every artist in the field, in no time at all. If I may be pardoned an impertinence, I rather think the New York Convention's Achievement Award for the Best Artist of the year was given to the wrong man. Though there is certainly a great deal of merit in who it *was* presented to, Emsh is so obviously the best man in the field, it sort of hurts right *here* every time I think about it. When he gets it next year, it will be an award of course, but not nearly the recognition he deserves. While other, more highly-touted men, have been running away with the pyrotechnic vote, Ed Emsh has been consistently turning out top-quality work, steadily improving his style, bringing much to a field he loves. If ever an artist was undersold and needed a standing ovation, it's the Emshwiller named Edward Alexander.

No gripes about the book, with the quibbling exception of the spot cuts you use. The ones used in the Silverberg yarn, for instance, were ludicrous. One of them looked like a fruit salad; another resembled the town tart, with a group of the boys wondering about her availability; and the other two were just out-of-place. There *must* be some other way to fill in empty space needed for the book's makeup. Other magazines

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No one liked the idea of a space-voyage with a corpse — and this was a most unusual corpse...

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SUNRISE ON MERCURY (illustrated on cover) ..... *Calvin M. Knox*
It was bad enough at any time — but when it came early...

FULFILLMENT ..... *Thomas N. Scortia*
Two beings with the same desire...

HUNTING MACHINE ..... *Carol Emshwiller*
A vignette of the mighty sportsmen of tomorrow...

These are a few of the attractions in the May issue of

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seem to be able to do it. But hell, if the spots continue, it certainly won't stop my buying the magazines, nor enjoying their contents as much as I did this one. A top-level job. A really professional job.

—CORDWAINER BIRD,
New York City, N. Y.

Spot cuts—and, actually, only the little ones, as on pages 93, 97, 111, 115, and 123 of *Future* Number 31 can be called spots—are last-minute measures when a book has to be closed yesterday, and there's a hole on this or that page to fill up.

As you note, there are other ways of handling the problem. (1) The story can be cut so that it ends full. (2) The tail-end of the story can be continued in the back of the book. (3) The editor can pad out the story with some deathless prose of his own, which will fit in with the text, and read as if the author had done it in the first place. (4) Little "filler" article, etc., can be thrown in, if the hole is big enough. (5) A house-ad can be put in.

There are objections to all of these solutions. (1) If a story needs cutting, the editor either should have the author do it, or do it himself when the mss. is sent off to the printer. (2) Continuing a story at the back of the book is an unhappy thing at best. Layout problems—arranging for stories which have double-page title layouts to start on lefthand pages, and stories which have single-page layouts to start on a righthand page—often make it necessary to carry the end of a story over to the backyard. But putting the final paragraph or so in the backyard is really horrid. (3) The editor's "deathless" prose-padding may turn out to be lifeless, to strike a false note, for which the author is unjustly blamed by discerning readers. (4) Good fillers aren't easily come by; most of the ones you see used thus are rather sad. (5) House ads in the middle of a story can be very irritating.

Nonetheless, I'll admit that your complaint is valid—unless a "spot" really fits the mood of the story where it appears, in which case I'm sure you wouldn't object—and I'll see what can be done.

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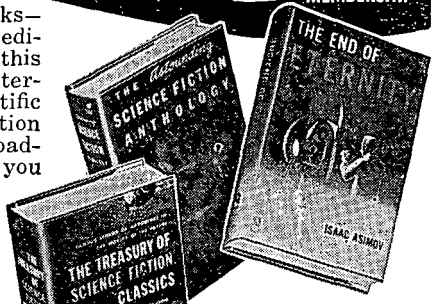

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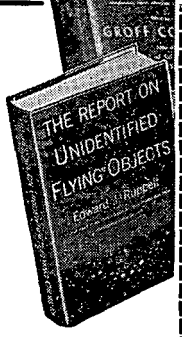

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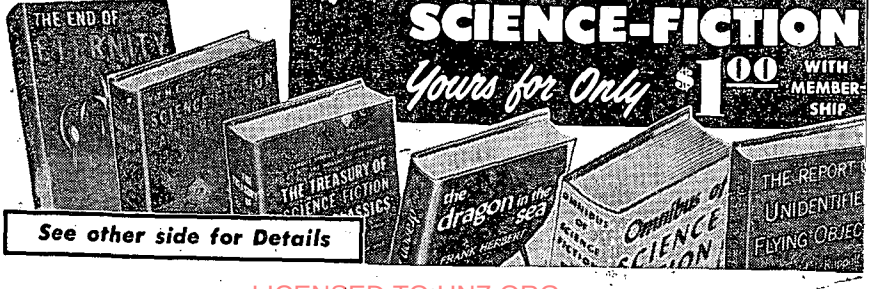
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